
**THE WIDER SYSTEMIC CONDITIONS
THAT SUPPORT READING FOR 11 TO
13 YEAR-OLD STUDENTS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Canterbury
by Josephine Florence Fletcher

The University of Canterbury

2011

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to teachers, literacy leaders, school principals and parents as they work together to improve reading outcomes and attitudes to reading for all young adolescent students.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures	viii
Abstract	ix
List of publications arising from the thesis	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
Section One: Introduction and Methods	1
Chapter One Introduction	2
Reading research.....	2
Reading in New Zealand.....	3
Wider systemic model of education	6
The wider research project	7
The problem	8
The research questions	12
Sub-questions	12
An overview of the approach	13
Types of schools.....	16
My position as a researcher.....	17
Outline of chapters	17
Chapter Two How the literature addresses the concept of effectiveness	20
What is ‘effective?’	20
Discourses that define ‘effective’	20
Perspectives from Australia, United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand	22
Further impact and wider support.....	24
Investigations of effective schools	25
Studies on effective teachers of reading	26
Reviews of research.....	30
Studies of schools that were undergoing school reform/professional development	32
US and Canadian professional development studies.....	32
New Zealand professional development studies	36
Summary of effective practices	39
How the ideas discussed above influenced the present study	40
Chapter Three Further theoretical frameworks informing the study	42
Why is theory important to my thesis?.....	42
Theories of learning to read	43
Acquisition of reading.....	46
Reading skills.....	47
Dialogue and participation	48
Comprehension	49
Scaffolding	50

Attitudes towards reading.....	51
Relationship between attitudes towards reading and reading achievement	52
Teacher efficacy	54
Effective teaching.....	54
Literacy professional development	55
School leadership	57
Parents' attitudes to and abilities in reading.....	59
Home-school partnerships.....	60
How my study builds on this review of the literature	61
Summary	62
Chapter Four The Research Process	64
A central principle guiding the research.....	64
Overview of chapter	65
The research methodology.....	65
A socio-constructivist research paradigm	65
Qualitative methodology	66
Data gathering methods.....	66
The research design.....	67
Case study	67
Critical case study	68
Advisory committee	69
Instruments to collect data.....	69
The interviewer	70
Methods of recording the interview data.....	70
Deciding on the type of interview	71
Interviewing children	72
Special procedural considerations adopted: Focus group interviews.....	72
Interview schedules	73
Observations.....	74
Prior to collecting the data	75
Selection of schools.....	75
Ethical considerations	76
Informed consent.....	77
Anonymity and confidentiality.....	77
Minimisation of risk	78
Data collection	78
Pilot study.....	78
Structured observational schedule.....	79
The unstructured observation	81
The selected critical case study schools	81
Selection of the teachers.....	84
Conducting the interviews.....	85
The observations	86
Sequence of gathering data	86
The analysis process.....	86
The analysis process.....	86
Initial or open coding	87

Axial coding	89
Selective coding	90
Observational surveys	90
Prior dissemination of my research	91
The trustworthiness of the research.....	91
Section Two	93
Chapter Five Principals leading change.....	93
Findings and discussion	94
Theme 1: Sustained professional development in literacy	94
Theme 2: School-wide use of standardised assessment to monitor achievement and identify specific needs	97
Theme 3: A collaborative environment with whole-school commitment	99
Theme 4: Literacy leaders working collaboratively alongside teachers.....	101
Theme 5: An expectation by the school staff that all learners will achieve in literacy	104
Conclusion.....	107
Chapter Six Literacy leaders and teachers working collaboratively.....	112
Findings and discussion	112
1. Literacy leadership	113
2. Professional development in reading	114
3. School-wide assessment of reading.....	116
4. Knowledge of strategies to support comprehension.....	117
5. Intense work around vocabulary	120
Challenges to literacy teaching at this level of schooling	120
Conclusion.....	121
Chapter Seven Parents' perspectives.....	124
Findings and discussion	125
Parents' attitudes and abilities in personal reading	125
Parents shifting their child to another school in an attempt to find solutions to their child's learning needs.....	127
Seeking external assessment of reading achievement	129
Trying to get extra help for the underachiever	131
Providing a supportive home environment for reading	133
Library use	134
Home-school relationships	134
Conclusions	135
Chapter Eight Young adolescent students' voices.....	139
Findings and discussion	139
Students' attitudes to reading	140
Motivation and encouragement	141
Influence of parents and other family members	142
Out of school access to books	144
Teachers' reading-related activities.....	145
Reading level.....	146
The children's preferences during reading instruction.....	147
Assessment tools	149

Conclusions	150
Chapter Nine A snapshot of what is occurring in guided reading lessons for 11- to 13-year-old students.....	153
Findings and discussion	154
Part A: Strategies the teachers implemented.....	155
Questioning and using prompts	155
Modeling	158
Telling and explaining.....	159
Part B: The students' interactions during the guided reading lesson	163
Student responses and interaction during guided reading group lesson.....	163
Student-led dialogue.....	166
Conclusions	168
Section Three	170
Chapter Ten A focus on the low decile, multicultural case study school	170
Findings and discussion	171
Background of the school prior to the commencement of the study	171
Quantitative data	173
Factors appearing to influence improvement	175
Professional development	175
Literacy leader.....	177
Funding	178
Assessment.....	178
Teaching.....	180
Home backgrounds and behaviour.....	182
Conclusions	183
Chapter Eleven Motivating students and improving attitudes to reading.....	186
Findings and discussion	187
Reading aloud to students and questioning	187
Motivating reading, especially among boys.....	190
Using picture books.....	193
Promoting books	194
Providing rewards	196
Making reading “safe” and fun	197
Summary and conclusion	198
Chapter Twelve A conceptual model of supporting reading.....	203
A wider systemic conceptual model.....	205
The school context	206
The principal	207
The literacy leader.....	207
The teachers	208
Working together within the school	208
Research and advanced study.....	208
The home.....	209
External agencies.....	210
Government and ministry of education	210

The wider social and cultural environment	211
The 11- to 13-year-old students	212
Conclusion.....	212
Section Four	213
Chapter Thirteen Conclusions and looking to the future	213
The different players who support reading.....	215
Literacy leaders and professional development	216
The teachers	217
The parents	218
The students	221
The role of the teacher during guided reading	222
The low decile multicultural school	223
Final words	224
Limitations	228
Implications for policy and practice	229
Future research directions	230
My closing message	232
Appendices	234
Appendix A Guiding principles to identify effective literacy practice	235
Appendix B Focus interview questions.....	237
Appendix C Observation schedules	242
Appendix D Axial coding table	243
References.....	247

List of Tables

Table 1. Students' overall performance in standardised reading tests at each of the five case study schools during the year of data collection.....	15
Table 2. Profile of schools.....	83
Table 3. Initial categories for coding the data for each subgroup of interviewees.....	88
Table 4. Frequency of teacher prompting per 10 minutes.....	158
Table 5. Frequency of teacher modeling per 10 minutes	158
Table 6. Frequency of telling and explaining per 10 minutes	159
Table 7. The frequency of student responses per 10 minutes.....	164
Table 8. Strategies case study teachers used to motivate student reading.....	199

List of Figures

Figure 1. Frequency of questions per minute	155
Figure 2. Frequency of teacher led strategies per minute.....	160
Figure 3. Change in STAR Stanine of all students who were at School E at the start of Y7 (2008) and were still there at the end of Y8 (2009).....	173
Figure 4. A conceptual model of supporting reading	206

Abstract

This thesis addresses better understandings of the wider systemic factors that support 11- to 13-year-old students in reading. A socio-constructivist paradigm was used to view multiple constructions of realities. Using a socially constructed ontology a mainly qualitative approach was instigated. From five case study New Zealand schools the principals, literacy leaders, teachers, parents and students were interviewed. Additionally, a structured observation schedule was used to observe the teachers during a guided reading lesson. By viewing the phenomenon through a range of participants' lenses I aimed to portray the richness of the case studies and provide thick descriptions of the phenomenon.

The thesis uncovered that the research literature contains few studies of the teaching of reading to children aged 11 to 13. This appears to be because much of the research has been carried out in the UK and USA where children move out of primary (elementary) education at age 11 or younger. This suggests a need for an international comparative study to determine if this factor is significant in the reading achievement of 11- to 13-year old-children. My research shows the reading development of these young adolescents in New Zealand occurs within a variety of contexts. Teachers alone cannot bear the burden of sole responsibility for the reading achievement of young adolescent students. There was a complex array of wider factors that supported teachers in developing regular, sustained and effective reading programmes. All of the schools had been involved in sustained professional development in literacy which was led by an external provider. The principals had taken an active part in the professional development alongside their staff. Additionally, the principals at each school had appointed a literacy leader to support staff in the teaching of reading. The principals had developed relational trust with their staff and together were working towards a shared vision. Apparent across all interviews with parents, students, teachers and literacy leaders was a quiet confidence that each of the case study schools were being led in a successful manner. What some of the parents did bring to attention was the range of experiences they had with different schools the children in their families had attended. A surprise finding in the analyses of the structured observation of guided reading was that even though the eight teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading, many of these teachers allowed little opportunity for student-led dialogue.

This case study research investigation found numerous areas of effective practice both within the classroom and by the wider school staff, but it also identified some common aspects in these particular five schools where teacher, wider school-community practices and national educational policy could be enhanced. Additionally, the quantitative analyses of data from the teachers' and students' interactions during guided reading illuminated the sometimes contradictory nature of interview data and observation data. This finding highlighted the importance of including quantitative analysis of classroom observation data when investigating teachers' practices, as the difference between 'rhetoric' and 'classroom reality' can differ. The evidence from these case studies strongly suggests that learning to read is not a skill that is learnt in isolation. Reading is not only a complex skill to achieve, but it is also contextual. Therefore, understanding the context and the varying players, who all have specific roles in supporting reading, are the cornerstones of knowing how we as a society can improve reading outcomes for all students.

List of publications arising from the thesis

Fletcher, J., Bridges, S., Greenwood, J., Grimley, M. and Parkhill, F. (2009). What supports reading achievement? What doesn't? 10 to 12 year old students in five New Zealand schools voice their views. *The Journal of Reading, Writing and Literacy*, 4(3), 56-86.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., & Parkhill, F. (2010). Are schools meeting their clients' expectations? Parents voice their perceptions about children learning to read in schools today. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 26(3), 438-446.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., Grimley, M. and Parkhill, F. (2011) Raising literacy achievement in reading: how principals of 10- to 12-year-old students are making this happen. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 14(1), 61-83. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2010.496873>.

Fletcher, J., Grimley, M., Greenwood, J. and Parkhill, F. (2011) Raising reading achievement in an 'at risk', low socio-economic, multicultural intermediate school. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 1-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2011.01497.x>.

Fletcher, J., Grimley, M., Greenwood, J. and Parkhill, F. (2011) Motivating and improving attitudes to reading in the final years of primary schooling in five New Zealand schools. *Literacy*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4369.2011.00589.x>&ArticleID=883880.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., Grimley, M., & Parkhill, F. (In Press, 2011). What are the school-wide strategies that support sustained, regular, effective instructional reading programmes for 10 to 13 year old students? A New Zealand experience. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., Grimley, M., & Parkhill, F. (In Press, 2011). What is happening when teachers of 11 to 13 year old students take instructional reading: A New Zealand snapshot. *Educational Review*.

Conference presentations

Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Greenwood, J., Grimley, M., & Bridges, S. (2008, 10-12 September). *So we have taught them to read. Is it enough? A discussion based on a case study on the literacy needs of 9 to 13 year old students and the strategies they need.* Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Goteborg, Sweden.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., & Parkhill, F. (2009, 2 -5 September). *Leading schools in raising reading achievement: A case study of principals making a difference.* Paper presented at the British Education Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, University of Manchester, Manchester, England.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., & Parkhill, F. (2009b, 2 -5 September). *What do parents have to say about their children's schooling: Are we teaching reading effectively?* Paper presented at the British Education Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, University of Manchester, Manchester, England.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., & Parkhill, F. (2009a, 29 November – 3 December). *Students' voices: What do they have to say about reading?* Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education International Education Research Conference, National Convention Centre, Canberra, Australia.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., & Parkhill, F. (2010, 12 -15 July). *What is happening in the teaching of reading for the students in the final years of their primary schooling?* Paper presented at the International Reading Association 23rd World Congress on Reading, Auckland, New Zealand.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J., & Parkhill, F. (2010, 1-3 September). *Improving reading comprehension: What works for 10 to 12 year old students?* Paper presented at the British Education Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, Warwick, England.

Fletcher, J., Greenwood, J. & Parkhill, F. *A case study of a low socio-economic, multicultural intermediate school improving reading achievement.* BERA 2011 Annual Conference, 6-8 September 2011, Institute of Education, London.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the help and encouragement of many people who have guided, mentored and supported me during my doctoral study. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my first supervisor Professor Janinka Greenwood who has had unfailing belief in supporting, challenging and encouraging me during this journey. She was able to sow the seeds and spark the interest in doctoral study in a way that made me feel encouraged and supported. Thank you Janinka, as throughout this journey you have not only believed in me achieving, but also continually challenged my thinking and provided questions that have made me 'dig deep' in developing scholarly and critical thinking as I read and came to know the literature and progressed through the research investigation. Dr Michael Grimley, my second supervisor, has been a constant support providing guidance, advice and posing critical questions. He has continually given specific feedback both during the research gathering process, the writing stages of the thesis and the final editing and refining of the total thesis. Thank you Mick, I have had the very good fortune of being one of your doctoral students. Your quick turn-around of my draft writings was well beyond the call of duty. Professor Niki Davis has stepped in and provided support for me, particularly in the earlier stage of my thesis writing while Janinka and Mick were on study leave. Niki's clear thinking and challenging questions helped direct me in shaping the planning for writing the thesis. Joining Niki's doctoral student group sessions allowed me to develop a sense of being part of a community of doctoral students who together could discuss and debate issues as we all moved forward in our doctoral study. I would like to thank all three of these people who have taken on the role of supervisor. They have given encouragement, continually challenged my thinking and welcomed me into the world of academia as a colleague and friend. Additionally, very special thanks with immense gratitude must go to Emeritus Professor Bridget Somekh who read through the near final version of my thesis providing constructive and focused feedback. Your wisdom and support in the final stages prior to submitting my thesis were very much appreciated.

Next, I would like to thank my Head of School, Dr Julie Mackey, who provided a role model of exemplary and focused study as she progressed through her doctoral studies. Julie was generous in ensuring that my workload during my doctoral studies was minimised to allow me time to read, research and write. Also, the Pro Vice Chancellor of the College of

Education, Professor Gail Gillon, has been central to my doctoral study. Thank you Gail, for providing funding to our staff to upgrade our qualifications and also for the six months of study leave I had which allowed me to have quality and uninterrupted time to work on my thesis. Your continued support and encouragement is very much appreciated.

Next, I would like to acknowledge the support of so many colleagues who helped me in an informal capacity. These people include Professor John Everatt, who frequently mentored and advised me on issues relating to my research as did Dr Brigid McNeill; Professor Garry Hornby and Professor Peter Roberts who gave advice; and Dr Ronnie Davey, Dr Donna Morrow and Dr Patrick Shepherd who in a friendly and caring manner encouraged me as I worked on my doctorate. Finally, I would especially like to acknowledge my long-term research colleague and mentor, Faye Parkhill who helped me develop my thinking and used her knowledge and wisdom in literacy education to guide my work. Thanks Faye, your encouragement and support have been outstanding.

Last of all, but just as important to me, have been my husband and family who have supported and encouraged me during this time of study. In particular, I appreciate David, my husband's unflagging belief that once you start something you do not give up when things get tough.

Section One: Introduction and Methods

Chapter One

Introduction

This research explores the wider systemic conditions that support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students. It sets out to unpack at a level of detail not previously documented what is happening in New Zealand schools that are reportedly effective in teaching reading to 11- to 13-year-old students. In doing so it aims to better understand the interrelationships of players from different groups that contribute to supporting students in their final two years of primary schooling. These players can include literacy leaders within schools, the principal, the teachers and parents. This chapter considers some of the wider issues impacting on reading for young adolescent students both within New Zealand and internationally, outlines the investigative approaches and explains the sequence of chapters that follow.

Reading research

Some studies have investigated effective teachers of reading (see, for example, Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, & Wray, 2001; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 2006; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, & Hampston, 2002; B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Wray, Medwell, Fox, & Poulson, 2000; Wray, Medwell, Poulson, & Fox, 2002). Other studies have explored what effective schools do to support reading development (see, for example, Borman, et al., 2007; J. Chamberlain, Daniels, Madden, & Slavin, 2007; Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Safford, 2009; Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Tolosa, Turner, & Hsiao, 2009; Madden & Slavin, 2010; McNaughton, Lai, Amituanai-Tolosa, & Ferry, 2008; McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald, & Farry, 2004; Slavin, 2010; B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005; Timperley & Parr, 2007). However, few studies on effective teaching of reading have specifically investigated 11- to 13-year-old students and very few have included listening to both the perceptions of the students and their parents. Additionally, several of the studies have focused on high poverty schools (see, for example, Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Tolosa, Turner, & Hsiao, 2009; Madden & Slavin, 2010; McNaughton, Amituanai-Tolosa, & Lai, 2007; Slavin, 2010; B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). (Further discussion of these studies can be found in Chapter Two.) What appeared to be missing in the literature on supporting reading was specific research

that investigated a range of schools from differing socio-economic areas that were reportedly effectively teaching reading, and which also examined the perceptions of not only the teachers, literacy leaders and principals, but also those of the students and their parents. Furthermore, it was not evident that this research focused on students in their final years of primary schooling.

Reading in New Zealand

New Zealand primary schools take children from five years old up to 13 years of age. This differs, for example, from the United Kingdom where primary schooling only includes children up to 11 years of age. I contend that the transition from primary to secondary school can make an impact on the reading achievement of students. New Zealand children who continue in primary schools until 12 to 13 years of age may have distinct advantages as they are situated in these final years of primary schooling with teachers who view teaching reading as their business. I suggest in countries such as those in the United Kingdom that teachers in secondary schools may well assume that children can already read when they arrive at 11 years of age, as is often the case in our New Zealand secondary schools where children begin at approximately 13 years of age. Furthermore, in secondary schools, often any specific teaching of reading is likely to be seen as 'remedial' and may only be offered when it is clear that the child is having problems understanding what is being taught in various subjects.

Nevertheless, in New Zealand, although we have students who are achieving well in reading there are students who are not (Crooks, Smith, & Flockton, 2009). The achievement gap between students from lower and higher socioeconomic status backgrounds, and with generally concomitant or similar levels of cultural capital, can be seen as early as school entry, and the gap tends to widen as students progress through the New Zealand education system (Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). Students with low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to perform at the lower range of achievement on standardised tests and other measures of literacy competency (Au, 2002; Crooks, et al., 2009; Elley, 1992; A. Farstrup, 2002; Flockton & Crooks, 2003, 2005). On the other hand, a range of achievement in reading undoubtedly can occur to varying extents in schools from differing socioeconomic areas. What was of interest to me was how 11- to 13-year-old students who are situated in a range of differing socioeconomic areas and school types can be supported in their reading development.

A student's ethnicity appears to have some connection to their reading development in New Zealand schools. For instance, Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and Pasifika students are more highly represented as underachieving in reading than other ethnic groups (Crooks, et al., 2009). Pasifika is a term of convenience used to encompass a diverse range of peoples from the South Pacific region now living in New Zealand and who have strong family and cultural connections to their Pacific Island countries of origin. Furthermore, a large body of literature now exists to show socio economic status and ethnicity as correlating factors in literacy achievement (Au, 2002; F. Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Gaine & George, 1999; Wylie, 2005; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). Overall in the New Zealand context, and also perhaps internationally, students situated in low socio economic status, multicultural schools appear to be more likely to be at risk of underachieving in reading.

In New Zealand schools the focus – as evident in the National Administration Guidelines (NAGS) – continues to be to improve the achievement of *all* students in literacy situated across a range of socioeconomic areas (Ministry of Education, 2009a). Although schools in low socio-economic areas are often targeted both by Ministry of Education initiatives and research investigations (see, for example, Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Toloa, Turner, & Hsiao, 2009; McNaughton, Amituanai-Toloa, & Lai, 2007) the wider systemic factors influencing supporting the reading achievement of students in all schools also needs to be better understood. This is particularly so for our young adolescent students where research investigations have indicated some concerning trends which might influence outcomes in reading development for this age group.

For example, in the second cycle of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2005/6, New Zealand, comparative to other higher performing countries, had a notable sized group of 10 year-old students who were poor readers and who did not reach the PIRLS lower international benchmarks (M. Chamberlain, 2007a). This pattern of underachievement by a significant percentage of students in reading has remained stable over the last several years. It is of continuing concern that in reading, the lowest performing 20 per cent of New Zealand students are two years behind the average reading age of their peers (see, for example, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001).

Another pattern of achievement, both in New Zealand and internationally, has been a reported dip, plateauing or tapering off in students' progress in reading achievement as they

reach their middle school years (see, for example, Brozo, 2005; Brozo & Flynt, 2007; A. Farstrup, 2005; Hattie, 2007; Moss, 2005; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Whitby, Lord, O'Donnell, & Grayson, 2006). In New Zealand, Hattie (2007) when establishing the norm for approximately 92,000 students from a wide range of school types, deciles and ethnicities on Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle)¹, (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2003a) items in reading, found that the average performance across the year levels showed that there was a flattening off in reading once students reached the upper primary years. At Year 5 (approximately nine years of age), over 80% of the students were at or above expectation, however at Year 8 (approximately twelve years of age), just under 50 per cent were below expectation.

In the US, commentators (see, for example, Brozo, 2005; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002) report on a slump in reading achievement at the fourth grade when a child is approximately eight to nine years of age. Hattie (2007) suggests that the 'fourth grade slump' in the US is different to the New Zealand pattern, where instead of a slump, there is a plateau in achievement during the final three to four years of the upper primary schooling (Years 5 to 8). Nevertheless, both in New Zealand and the US, students in low socio-economic schools and/or from low-income families tend to be more likely to exhibit signs of tapering off in their reading (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald, & Farry, 2004). McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald and Farry's (2004) New Zealand study found that despite successful interventions at an earlier age level, for a significant number of students in low socio-economic schools there was still a tapering off in reading achievement. Additionally, as outlined earlier, in New Zealand both Māori and Pasifika students are more likely to be underachieving in reading (M. Chamberlain, 2007a; Crooks, et al., 2009). These issues raise a number of questions.

What are the wider systemic components that support reading for young adolescent students? Is the teacher, along with the other members of the school staff, solely responsible for supporting young adolescents with their reading? Is what we, as New Zealand educators, perceive as effective practice in reading, really effective?

¹ asTTle is an educational resource for assessing literacy achievement in both reading and writing. It provides teachers, students, and parents with information about a student's level of achievement, relative to the curriculum achievement outcomes and national norms of performance for students in years 4 to 12. It can compare individual and group performance with the national average and other groups and or similar school types.

Wider systemic model of education

My interest in exploring the range of systemic factors that contribute to a child's reading was influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model where he describes the child in the centre of a series of inter-related concentric systems that all influence a child's development and learning. These interconnected nested structures contribute to children's development, success and future (Beveridge, 2005; Wright Springate & Stegelin, 1999). They comprise of the following systems: The ontogenic system relates to the child's character and abilities; The micro-system involves the processes and structures that occur in a setting such as the home, classroom and playground, where the developing child is placed; The meso-system is made up of the processes and linkages that occur between two or more settings, such as the school and the home, in which the developing child exists; The exo-system relates to the linkages and processes between two or more settings in which the developing child is not usually placed but in which the actions that occur can shape the setting where the child does exist. Thus, a child might be influenced by the relationship between his and/or her parents' workplaces and the home; The macro-system, the outer concentric layer, includes the overarching pattern of values, beliefs and attitudes of the social institutions of a particular culture or sub-culture (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner (1996) suggests that, over time, there are constant interactions between individuals and their environments. Referring to environmental influences as significant others, he argued that their importance relative to the developing child lies in the belief systems inherent in them and in how those systems interact with that child. For example, the interactions and relationships children have with their surroundings, inclusive of family, school and neighbourhood, wield a positive or negative influence on the children's cognitive and emotional development. Not surprisingly, poor or non-existent relationships between these systems bring little advantage to children (Beveridge, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). With these premises in mind, when principals and teachers strengthen their relationships with students' homes and when parents and caregivers strengthen their relationships with their children's schools, the children are likely to be advantaged. In a similar manner, Weigel, Martin and Bennett (2005) in their study of the ecological influences on the literacy skills of children, highlight the importance of appreciating the numerous contexts that can influence reading achievement.

With this in mind, I wanted to comprehend how the variety of groups of people, such as teachers, literacy leaders, principals and parents, can work together in a systemic manner to provide positive and effective literacy learning environments for all students in their final two years of primary schooling in a range of socio-economic areas. Nevertheless, although this thesis explores all types of schools, one chapter (Chapter Ten) focuses specifically on the one very low decile² school in this study.

In this thesis fifty-one participants were interviewed across five schools. This included five principals, five literacy leaders, eight teachers (two of whom were also their school's literacy leader), ten parents of Year 7 and 8 students and 25 Year 7 and 8 students. Additionally, the eight teachers were observed taking instructional reading.

The wider research project

At the time I was planning to start my doctorate the opportunity arose to bid for a research project funded by the Cognition Institute. Since I had been negotiating with Professor Janinka Greenwood about supervision we decided to bid for the project with Janinka Greenwood as the principal investigator as she had successful experience leading research projects. As the research question for the project grew out of my prior research, I was delegated a key role in developing the project. Additionally, Doctor Michael Grimley became my second supervisor. Because we had to complete the project within a relatively short time-frame we built a research team consisting of Michael Grimley, Faye Parkhill and Sue Bridges to cover both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study that gives rise to my thesis grew out of the qualitative components of the funded project. Although I have used a small amount of quantitative data this part was collected separately. Mick Grimley and Sue Bridges took responsibility for the wider quantitative aspects of the research project which have not been used in my thesis.

Faye Parkhill joined me in collecting a broad range of qualitative data during the year of the project (2008). Within the terms of this thesis, Faye Parkhill takes the role of co-researcher as outlined in Chapter Four and continues as a critical friend in the development of my thesis and much of my other work. All the seven papers either published or in press, which are listed after the abstract in this thesis, were written solely by me. The whole team has been

² Deciles are a measure that the Ministry of Education uses to ascertain the socio-economic (SES) group within the school (Decile 1 denotes the lowest SES group and Decile 10 the highest).

cited as authors of the first paper published from the qualitative data. Thereafter, I have continued to cite Janinka Greenwood and Michael Grimley as second authors because of their role as my supervisors. Faye Parkhill is also cited as a supporting author because of the role she has taken as my critical advisor. Janinka Greenwood developed her own article from our funded research project data in which she took first authorship. Similarly, Faye Parkhill also wrote a further paper from this initial wider research project material.

The problem

Along with a tapering off in progress in reading achievement in the final years of primary schooling, a further issue was impacting on reading underachievement for some students in the later years of primary schooling. National and international literature contended that regular and sustained, guided/instructional reading was not consistently occurring in many upper primary/elementary classes (see, for example, Brozo, 2005; W. Brozo, G. Shiel, & K. Topping, 2007; McNaughton, et al., 2007; Pearson, 2009a; Pressley, 2002a; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). This aligned with my experience as a lecturer in literacy education where anecdotal reports from student teachers and other literacy experts in the education field reported that guided reading programmes were not consistently occurring in a sustained manner in the upper primary classrooms.

Other international data raised further concerns for students later in their primary schooling. In the 2006 iteration of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) survey, which focused on children 9 to 10 years of age, the children surveyed in England reported reading for pleasure less frequently than the children in the other participating countries. These children also had poorer attitudes towards reading than the children in the other countries (Twist, Schagen, & Hodgson, 2007). Although reading for pleasure and positive attitudes towards reading may arguably not be a requirement for all adults to succeed in life, they do have relevance for young adolescent students who are likely to be consolidating their skills and knowledge in word vocabulary and comprehension prior to entering secondary schooling. In the UK, a more recent National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) study, found that levels of reading for enjoyment amongst English students in the middle and upper levels of the primary school had not declined further since the PIRLS survey (Sainsbury & Clarkson, 2008). This stability in students' levels of reading for enjoyment in the UK is worthy of further investigation to better understand the wider systemic and

sociocultural factors that may influence a young adolescent's attitude to and motivation to read, particularly in this age of multimedia communication.

The New Zealand 2006 PIRLS results show that the children surveyed tended to have more positive attitudes towards reading than the children in many of the other participating countries, including England and the United States (M. Chamberlain, 2007a). However, a closer look at the New Zealand results presents a less optimistic picture. The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) assessment of reading achievement of Years 4 and 8 students shows that reading as a preferred leisure activity outside of school declined markedly between 2004 and 2008 (Crooks, et al., 2009). In 1996, 77 per cent of Year 8 students cite reading as a preferred leisure activity. By 2008, that percentage had dropped by 18 points. According to the NEMP data, in Year 4, 80 per cent of the students were positive about reading in their own time compared to 59 per cent of the Year 8 students. Clearly, there is a decline in attitudes towards reading within the New Zealand population, even if, overall, the 10-year-olds compared well with their counterparts in the other countries that participated in PIRLS.

In summary, there were the following four indicators of a negative situation developing in reading for students in their later years of primary schooling in New Zealand. Firstly, there was international research data showing a notable group of 10 year-old New Zealand students were underachieving in reading. Secondly, there was evidence that reading progress was dropping off or plateauing in the final years of primary schooling. Thirdly, further evidence suggested that instructional reading programmes were not consistently occurring in the upper primary school classrooms. And finally, there was a decline in attitudes towards reading as a leisure activity by the time New Zealand students reached their final year of primary schooling at age 13.

Consequently, it is an area worthy of further investigation, particularly as the last two years of primary schooling are most likely to be the final chance for students who have been underachieving in reading to receive instruction on reading before entering the secondary school system. There is an expectation that, on entering secondary school, students should have solidly-grounded reading skills and strategies which allow them to engage in and comprehend a wide range of text types. As students transition into secondary schooling undoubtedly reading expertise is a prerequisite for academic success. Students who have low

levels of reading literacy find that this impacts on most other subject areas (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). This in turn can lead to a spiral of failure, disengagement with schooling, lowering of self-esteem, long-term educational and life aspirations and outcomes (Chharbra & McCardle, 2004; Everatt, 2009; Sticht, 2001).

Additionally, the need for strong literacy skills in today's globalised and information age society has never been greater (Overton, Hills, & Dixon, 2007). More employment positions require higher reading and writing literacy skills than previously. The advent of computers and the Internet has placed even greater demand on literacy skills. Whether used for study, employment or recreation, these tools require reading and writing proficiency that differs in some respects from that needed for print media (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

The number of students who leave school with only the most basic functional reading skills both in New Zealand and internationally is thus of considerable concern (Lockwood, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2005; Strommen & Mates, 2004). The 2006 iteration of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey of 15-year-olds' reading achievement conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2007) shows a significant percentage of students in English-speaking countries performing at Level 1 or below (on a reading scale from 1 to 5). For example, in the UK, 19.0 per cent of the students were in this category, in New Zealand, 14.6 per cent, Australia 13.4 per cent, and Canada 11.0 per cent. In Finland, only 4.8 per cent of the student cohort surveyed was in this category. Because of errors in the PISA reading test booklets administered to students in the U.S., results for these students were not reported. However, Brozo and Flynt (2007) cite National Assessment of Educational Progress data showing that 38 per cent of students in the U.S. are reading at a sub-basic level (below a basic level of reading).

Low-level reading skills also align with students' ability to gain nationally recognised qualifications while at school and at the tertiary education level. For example, over the last 10 years in New Zealand, approximately 120,000 students (more than 20 per cent of all school-leavers) left secondary school without gaining the National Certificate in Education Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 (an external assessment for students in their third year of secondary schooling) or, prior to the introduction of NCEA, without gaining the School Certificate (Harris, 2008).

Those in New Zealand Government, as in other governments around the world, place strong emphasis on raising literacy achievement in schools, even though New Zealand readers score relatively well in the upper reading achievement levels compared to readers in other countries (Ministry of Education, 2002; Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, & Foy, 2007). For example, in the aforementioned PISA 2006 survey (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2007), 15.9 per cent of New Zealand 15-year-olds scored at Level 5 (the upper level) compared to 9.0 per cent in the UK, 10.6 per cent in Australia and 14.5 per cent in Canada. However, a concern in New Zealand is the uneven overall achievement result across the New Zealand population of student readers.

The New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2006) summary of the most recent iteration (2006) of the Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), reports that the range between good and poor readers in New Zealand was particularly wide relative to the ranges evident in the other participating countries. This ‘long tail of underachievement’, as it has been dubbed (M. Chamberlain, 2007a; Hattie, 2003; Ministry of Social Development, 2004; New Zealand Parliament, 2008), accounts for approximately 20 per cent of the students in both primary and secondary schools (Flockton & Crooks, 2005; Mullis, et al., 2007; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2003d; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2007). Of further concern is the fact that the average literacy level of New Zealand children dropped from 13th among the 35 participating countries in the 2001 iteration of PIRLS to 24th among the 40 participating countries in the 2006 iteration (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The current government in New Zealand acknowledged the need to put even more effort into raising literacy (reading, writing, numeracy) standards and the commensurate need for quality teaching in this area. This acknowledgement has included setting national standards for reading and writing, bringing in targeted funding for literacy initiatives within schools and establishing a review of teacher training in literacy (National Party Policy, 2008). Alongside these measures, the Ministry of Education’s National Administration Guidelines (2009b) for education give top priority to raising literacy achievement.

The research questions

In response to these challenges the following study has arisen. I wanted to find out what was occurring across a range of schools in differing socioeconomic areas, rather than focus solely on lower socioeconomic schools. My belief was that although many of our more ‘at risk’ students in reading tend to be situated in lower decile multicultural schools, as educators we need to understand what is happening across a range of school types. The key research question that shaped my research investigation was:

What are the wider systemic conditions that support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students?

Given the concerns raised from the literature discussed, I contend my findings help guide understandings and assist in uncovering the wider systemic factors that allowed some schools to facilitate reportedly effective reading programmes. Also, the findings illuminate how parents and the school staff together support young adolescents’ reading.

Sub-questions

The research investigation, while focusing on the wider systemic conditions that support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students, had a number of underlying questions. They were:

- What are the behaviours, beliefs and special characteristics of principals that create and sustain a school environment conducive to the reading achievement of students in their final years of primary school?
- What are the kinds of attitudes, relationships, aspirations and leadership styles that are characteristic of schools where regular, reading instruction has been occurring and has been more successful in the upper primary classes?
- What are the school-wide strategies that support sustained, regular, effective instructional reading programmes?
- What are the specific strategies that Years 7 and 8 teachers use during the guided reading group lesson and what types of interactions do the students make?
- What are the Year 7 and 8 parents’ perceptions of their children’s reading development and both the parents and their children’s experiences and relationships with the teachers and the school during this process?

- What are the Year 7 and 8 students' perceptions of what they thought empowered them to be effective readers?

With these questions in mind, I wanted to investigate if there were schools in which reportedly there was effective reading instruction in the upper primary classes, and what were the unique features and/or special characteristics of these schools and their staff that positioned their Year 7 and 8 teachers to successfully implement effective reading programmes. I aimed to encapsulate the inside view and present a detailed account of how the teachers, literacy leaders, principals and parents felt about and understood their roles in supporting 11- to 13-year-old students' reading.

An overview of the approach

I selected five case study schools to investigate the presence of unambiguous, comprehensible and non-trivial collection of conditions where expected outcomes would be found. I maintain that findings from purposively sampling information-rich cases would give a powerful improvement to understanding and knowledge about issues of central importance surrounding supporting reading for young adolescents.

To investigate the phenomenon of what was supporting the reading of 11- to 13-year-old students in New Zealand schools, reportedly effective teachers of reading for students in their final years of primary school were sought. The interpretation of the term 'effective' in relation to schools that were effectively teaching reading to 11- to 13-year-old students was problematised in consultation with the research project's advisory committee. A set of guiding principles for selecting schools with effective literacy practice was collaboratively developed with the advisory committee. This is discussed more fully in Chapter Four. Alongside these guiding principles, five schools and their teachers were nominated using four measures. They were:

1. The nomination, by the advisory committee, of schools they believed to be effective in teaching Year 7 to 8 students in reading.
2. The nomination of the effective Year 7 to 8 teachers of reading by their principal.

3. Positive reports from the Education Review Office (ERO). [ERO is a government department tasked with reviewing and reporting publicly on the quality of education in all New Zealand schools].
4. The school principal supplying evidence of the overall reading achievement of the students in his or her school. This evidence took the form of the students' scores on one of the two standardised tests of reading achievement commonly used in New Zealand primary schools: the Assessment Tools for Teaching Learning (asTTle) (Ministry of Education, 2003a) or the Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading ³ (STAR) (Elley, 2001).

Table 1 shows the data the principals presented for each of their schools (Schools A, B, C, D and E). At each school, the data presented by the respective principal showed an overall improvement in students' reading during the year of the study and/or positive achievement in comparison to school populations of similar type. In New Zealand, where schools are self-managing, assessment practices and assessment tools differ. Principals have different ways of reporting and presenting students' overall reading achievement on their chosen standardised test. This was evident in the five schools, where the principals had different ways of reporting and presenting the students' overall reading achievement on the chosen standardised test.

Schools A, C and E were using STAR testing, which allocates a student's reading achievement according to stanines. With STAR, a stanine score of 1 to 3 is below average, 4, 5 and 6 is average, 7 and 8 are above average, and 9 is outstanding. As can be seen in Table 1, these three schools were able to show an overall improvement in the students' reading achievement during the year of this research investigation.

In School E, an intermediate⁴ school the Year 7 students showed, across the year of the study, a greater increase in their reading achievement than did the Year 8 students. The principal of this school suggested that the difference in performance between the two year groups may have been an outcome of recent changes within the school administration,

³ STAR is a norm-referenced, New Zealand contextualised assessment tool that measures a range of reading skills (word recognition, sentence and paragraph comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, advertising language and writing style).

⁴ Intermediate schools are two-year schools that cater to Year 7 and Year 8 students. They are a stepping stone between the lower levels of the primary school and the high school.

including his arrival as a new principal. Concerns raised by ERO about student reading performance, student attitudes and behaviour had led the principal to address the prior underperformance of the school management and the associated negative attitudes and behaviour of some of the Year 8 students. The principal thought the Year 8 students' poorer reading achievement may have related to the difficulty of changing these attitudes and behaviours during the year.

Table 1

Students' overall performance in standardised reading tests at each of the five case study schools during the year of data collection

School	Standardised Tests used	Students' overall achievement in standardised reading tests
A	STAR (Stanines range from 1-9 with one the lowest)	In March the overall average stanine was 5.3 compared to 6.2 by October later in the year From March to October 23 per cent of students had moved up 2 or more stanines and 69 per cent had moved up one stanine
B	asTTle (a reading scale from 250 to 1050 where 250 is the lowest)	Scores ranged from 563 to 834 with an average score of 658 compared to 500 to 580 for schools of a similar type.
C	STAR	Over one year from Year 7 to Year 8 students made an average improvement of 0.24 stanine from 5.72 to 5.96
D	asTTle	Scores ranged from 580 to 700 with an average score of 630 compared to 500 to 580 for schools of a similar type
E	STAR	Over one year (February to November) Year 7 students made an average improvement of 0.41 stanine from 3.89 to 4.3 while the year 8 students made an average improvement of 0.2. In February 74.4 per cent of year 7 students were achieving stanine 1 to 4 and by November it had decreased to 57.1 per cent.

Schools B and D were using asTTle testing, the reading scale of which ranges from 250 to 1,050. The only data schools B and D could provide us with were their students' overall scores on asTTle at the end of the year. When comparing these scores with the scores of students from schools of a similar type and size, it was evident that the schools B and D students were outperforming their counterparts in the other schools of a similar type.

In summary, schools A, C and E were able to show that their students' reading achievement improved markedly during the year of the research investigation, while schools B and D

showed that their children's overall reading results compared favourably with similar populations of students.

Types of schools

To ensure that the five cases would be more likely to give an overview of differing school types in the New Zealand context, a range of school types were purposively selected to represent: differing ethnic populations, socio-economic areas, geographic locations; school types such as state and integrated (usually Roman Catholic in denomination); and intermediate (Years 7 to 8) and full primary (Years 1 to 8). Within this, an account of the view points from a variety of participants and school types would give authenticity (Neuman, 2003). In doing this, I sought to explore the kinds of attitudes, relationships, aspirations, and leadership styles that are characteristic of the upper primary classes where regular reading instruction had been occurring and had been more successful. By viewing the phenomenon through a range of participants' lenses I endeavoured to portray the richness of the case studies and provide thick descriptions of the phenomenon. In line with Stake (2005) I used a multiple case study method to understand what was perceived to be each case's own issues and what the participants within the case studies perceived to be important within their own environment. I then looked for commonalities.

Using interviews, the understandings and perceptions of the different actors (the principals, teachers, literacy leaders, students and parents) were analysed and compared to how they viewed the phenomenon of what has been perceived as an effective school in teaching reading in their upper primary school classes. Observations of teachers of 11- to 13-year-old students, nominated by the principals as effective teachers of reading, were examined in regards to the teachers' perceptions, behaviours and beliefs. Furthermore, what was perceived as effective literacy practice in these selected case study schools was compared against the international literature. By collecting and analysing data from multisite case study schools I wanted to build up a descriptive model that would encompass the phenomena occurring across these schools.

In this way my research set out to unpack, at a level of detail not previously documented, what is happening to support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students in New Zealand schools that is perceived as effective while also taking cognizance of the wider systemic factors that might support these students from a range of school types. I wanted to use this to develop a

sociocultural model of what supports reading for 11- to 13-year-old students which can serve both researchers and educators to understand better the reciprocal interrelationships and dynamic nature of these different components that together support young adolescents.

My position as a researcher

Prior to my doctorate, my research with colleagues had focused on supports and barriers to reading for 9 to 13 year-old students from the two main ethnic minorities, non-indigenous groups (Pasifika and Asian) in New Zealand (Fletcher & Parkhill, 2007; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, & Taleni, 2006; Fletcher, Parkhill, & Fa'afoi, 2005; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, & Morton, 2006; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, & Taleni, 2010; Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, & O'Regan, 2009; Parkhill & Fletcher, 2010; Parkhill, Fletcher, & Fa'afoi, 2005; Taleni, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, & Fletcher, 2007). These studies had involved interviewing students, teachers, parents, principals and wider community stakeholders. The investigations had drawn on Nuthall and Alton-Lee's (Nuthall, 2007) work, especially in terms of the value it ascribes to learning from children's actual experiences. The studies uncovered what these children perceived to be effective and engaging literacy practices during their primary schooling and allowed me, as a researcher and teacher educator, to understand situations as they were constructed by the children (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Also, the views of parents and wider stakeholders were explored in many of these studies to gain multiple perspectives and to better understand the wider contextual factors that influence reading achievement and motivation. I sought to build on this prior research by focusing on students attending a range of New Zealand schools rather than just focusing on low socioeconomic, multicultural schools.

For the purposes of my research investigation, the term '*programme*' was defined as not only programmes at a class level but also included wider school programmes in supporting reading for 11- to 13-year-old students.

Outline of chapters

The thesis is divided into four sections with two appendices. In the first section, the current chapter provides an introduction to the research. The discussion of the literature surrounding the investigation is situated within Chapter Two and in the theoretical framework in Chapter Three. Chapter Two begins with a discussion of the term 'effective' in relation to the teaching of reading and the different perceptions surrounding the use of testing to measure

effectiveness. It gives an overview of the literature on effective teachers of reading and schools where effective teaching had been identified. Chapter Three outlines my theoretical position in relation to literacy and how that relates to theories of reading which underpinned this research investigation. Chapter Four describes the overarching research methodology and specific methods used. The second and third sections report the research findings.

The second section explores the perspectives of the different groups (principals, literacy leaders and teachers, students and parents) within the study. The findings in each of these chapters are presented in a manner that allows the voices of the multiple perspectives to be unpacked and examined. In this way the layered complexities are investigated from initially the perspective of the school principals and then the literacy leaders and teachers. Next the parents' perspectives are explored, followed by the 11- to 13-year-old students' perspectives. To conclude this section, the structured observations and interviews with the classroom teachers are investigated.

Thus, in Chapter Five the role of the principal in leading effective schooling is explored and discussed. In Chapter Six the theme of leadership is continued, and reports on the literacy leadership within each of the case study schools. Chapter Seven presents the findings from the interviews with the parents. This chapter discusses parents' perceptions of what schools can do to support their children's reading progress and the role that they took in encouraging reading. Chapter Eight presents the students' perceptions of what supports their reading and their experiences as learners. Chapter Nine presents the observations of the guided reading lessons and the teachers' beliefs and experiences in teaching reading.

In the third section, two specific issues are investigated. Firstly, as only one school amongst the five case study schools was from a very low socio-economic area and had a considerable percentage of students from Pasifika and Māori backgrounds, it seemed worthy of closer scrutiny. As discussed earlier, this was particularly relevant as in New Zealand, both Pasifika and Māori students are overall more likely to be underachieving in reading (Crooks, et al., 2009). Therefore, in Chapter Ten there is an in-depth focus on this low-decile, multicultural intermediate school. The purpose of this chapter is to better understand what factors influenced the staff in successfully implementing a reportedly effective reading programme in one of the more at-risk school populations. The final chapter of findings explores what the effective teachers of reading did to motivate young adolescent students to

read and what strategies they used to help negotiate students away from what Byrne (2007) calls points of discouragement in reading mastery.

The fourth section includes Chapter Twelve and summarises my conclusions in a conceptual model of supporting reading for 11- to 13-year-old students and relates this to the case study schools. Finally, Chapter Thirteen presents the overall conclusions from the research, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the research and areas for further research investigations.

The accompanying appendices include the schedule of questions for the different interviewees and the observational schedules.

Chapter Two

How the literature addresses the concept of effectiveness

What is ‘effective?’

Specific research investigations that contribute to supporting reading of young adolescents that were viewed from multiple lenses of players from different groups proved to be difficult to locate in the literature. This was particularly the case for studies that included parents’ and students’ perceptions. There was a dearth of research in supporting reading for this specific age level which also took a wider systemic perspective. Thus, to help position my investigation and build on prior knowledge, studies that investigated effective teachers of reading, and those studies of schools undergoing school reform or professional development particularly in reading were explored. However, many of the findings from these studies related to what can occur throughout different school levels than the Year 7 and 8 levels where my research investigation is situated. Additionally, several had a limited range of perspectives, often only including teachers, principals and other related educators, rather than seeking the views and unpacking the interrelationships between the different groups of players, such as parents and students and/or exploring teaching that is culturally located in reflecting students’ local and wider cultural identities.

The central point of my study on 11- to 13-year-old students was in line with Pressley and Wharton-McDonald’s (2006) and Freebody’s (2009) call for more specific research focused on students’ reading in these later years in order to build our knowledge base. I sought to frame my investigation on supporting 11- to 13-year-old students in a manner that was more thoughtful of the wider contextual factors. To help position my thesis, this chapter begins with a discussion of what ‘effective’ can mean to different stakeholders. Next, an examination of the literature on effective teachers of reading and effective schools is explored.

Discourses that define ‘effective’

Discourses surrounding what are professed as ‘effective’ practice have been debated from different pedagogical perspectives. Content-focused, teacher-centred, transmissionist

pedagogies have situated a more traditional approach to learning. Constructivist pedagogies have perceived learning as being ‘student-centered’ and ‘process focused’ (Freebody, Martin, & Maton, 2008).

Martin, Freebody and Maton (2008) contend that to advance our understanding of effective practices, new and effective forms of pedagogical interventions and strategies need to be explored. Generic metaphors, such as, ‘high order thinking’, ‘deep understanding’ and ‘personal constructions of knowledge’ should be translated into more specific and actionable strategies. The provision of such strategies would help equip students with the intellectual resources which will have an effect on their ways of thinking, understanding and being that will continue throughout their lives. For example, one perspective concerning effective teachers of reading is that they provide a learning environment where students discuss texts and talk for extended periods of time. In this model discussion has a high degree of uptake by the students, and students are actively involved in critically analysing texts (Soter, et al., 2008).

This aligned with one of the key criteria for the set of guiding principles to nominate effective teachers of reading that the research advisory committee for my thesis had developed. This was that the teacher encourages rich discussion with and amongst the students by having them question and challenge their teacher and one another about the texts they are reading and to justify their responses to those texts. The ‘effectiveness’ when strategies such as these are employed, is in terms of developing proactive and inquiring citizenry (Freebody, et al., 2008). This initiates a question in determining what are the goals of developing literacy skills? Do those who hold political power want to encourage debate and critical thinking or is the preference that the education system provides a future generation of citizens who will have the necessary skills to maintain the status quo in society? Key to this is what is viewed as effective teaching of literacy and the outcomes in regards to the very nature of thinking and analysis of issues impacting on society it might provoke from the next generation. Arguably this may have political implications within some societies. Thus, deciding how effectiveness is measured or quantified becomes problematic.

In today’s educational world, measurements of ‘effectiveness’ in schooling and more specifically literacy learning are frequently sought to provide accountability and reassure public perceptions (Connell, 2009; Duffy & Hoffman, 2002; Freebody, et al., 2008; Kemmis

& Grootenboer, 2008; Klenowski, 2009). Duffy and Hoffman (2002) contend that when the criterion for identifying schools as 'effective' is unexpected achievement gains using standardised test results, qualitative facets of achievement are obscured. Additionally, Mosenthal and Mekkelsen (2008) when reporting on their long term US research study of school improvement in literacy argue that using high-stakes standardised test results is inappropriate in the context of school-wide professional development to portray growth.

On the other hand, when the criterion of effectiveness is based on a person's or group of stakeholders' perceived reputation of a school or teacher, it is possible that this may be the result of misguided judgement and that there could be better examples of effectiveness. Using only one criterion to identify effectiveness is limited. Additionally, the term 'effectiveness' has an impression of authoritative conclusiveness, when in actuality there are further questions to examine surrounding 'effectiveness' and how it can be further improved (Duffy & Hoffman, 2002).

Perspectives from Australia, United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand

Martin, Freebody and Maton (2008) describe that in Australia, and internationally, in times of rapidly changing technologies and labour markets there are serious concerns around schooling and the balance of the curriculum. Measuring effectiveness utilizing a range of standardised testing has become prevalent. These authors maintain that using public concerns about schooling and the impact of rapid changes in the market place are simply not acceptable reasons to concentrate on benchmarking education systems. They are concerned about the use of international comparisons on tests of generic skills, including literacy. These authors are not alone in their concerns surrounding the reasons for and use of testing to measure 'effectiveness'.

Connell (2009) describes how there have been recent moves in Australia to use test results to uncover perceptions of 'effectiveness'. In this system elite teachers would be selected and incentivised with payments by results. She suggests that a flow-on effect from these two strategies would be a gradual destabilising of the teaching workforce. The use of testing outcomes to reward 'effective' teachers would provide divisions in school workforces. Furthermore, the use of high stakes testing to measure effectiveness cannot be treated as independent from culture. Klenowski (2009) emphasises that there is no such thing as a culture-free assessment. This is particularly problematical for indigenous students who in the

Australian education system continue to be labelled as failing. This situation of indigenous and minority ethnic students from low socioeconomic backgrounds failing in literacy learning is similar in the New Zealand context as well (Alton-Lee, 2003; McNaughton, et al., 2007; McNaughton, et al., 2004).

Both Connell (2009) and Klenowski (2009), when exploring the Australian educational scenario, reflect on issues of power, with a predominantly mono-cultural curriculum and consequent mono-cultural testing regime. Validity and fairness are fundamental in developing 'culture fair' assessment (Klenowski, 2009). Without these fundamental factors in place, measuring what is perceived as 'effective' is likely to maintain the status quo. Assessment and deciding on what measures 'effectiveness' should address the needs of students and emerge from understanding and acknowledging students' sociocultural backgrounds (Klenowski, 2009).

When discussing the United States context, Duffy and Hoffman (2002) question the emphasis on school and teacher effectiveness being measured by increases in reading outcomes using standardised achievement tests. They express concern that as teachers are placed in a position where 'teaching to the test' is seemingly obligatory, that there will be diminished opportunities to use high order thinking skills. They contend that in this era of high stakes testing that the "name of the game is achievement of low-level literacy skills (p. 383)". They conclude that researchers need to 'trouble' this area and ask questions about literacy learning beyond how well the students achieved in the test.

In the United Kingdom (UK), Gorard (2010) discusses his serious doubts about the internal model of 'school effectiveness' current in research investigations, and in policy and practice. He examines the preponderance for UK ministry officials and policy makers to rely on standardised testing to measure school and teacher effectiveness. In his detailed analyses of the intricacies of the calculations used to interpret national test results to measure 'school effectiveness', he concludes that the results were unreliable and flawed. As Gorard's article is only recently published there has not been a chance for UK ministry officials to defend this comprehensive attack on the spurious nature of their 'school effectiveness' calculations. Regardless of the credibility of the UK calculations of 'school effectiveness', measurements of learning using testing provide a narrow understanding of the purpose of education. Gorard reiterates Duffy's and Hoffman's (2002) concern that testing for 'school effectiveness'

unwittingly, frequently encourages teachers to ‘teach for the test’ (Duffy & Hoffman, 2002; Gorard, 2010). Furthermore, as Wray, Medwell, Fox and Poulson (1999) suggest what is perceived as effective reading behaviour is at times centred around the disagreement of the importance of lower level technical skills such as decoding and fluency compared to higher order skills of comprehension and vocabulary. Cremin, Bearne, Mottram and Goodwin (2008) explored the reading preferences and habits of 1200 primary teachers in England. These authors suggest that there was a tension between the teachers’ personal reading habits and their knowledge of children’s literature. They suggest that this is compounded by a stranglehold placed on teachers’ pedagogic practice, because of the constant pressure of accountability in regards to tests and targets within the schools.

In the New Zealand context, there has been a move to raise accountability and identify effective schools with effective teachers. Towards the end of 2009, the newly elected government developed draft documents for comment on the introduction of national standards in literacy and numeracy. By the start of 2010, national standards in reading and writing, and numeracy were put in place. Many principals perceived the national standards as unworkable. Inflamed debate and anger amongst educators was evident as the changes became mandated. For example, in *The Press*, Christchurch (Conway & Eleven, 2010) an article described how at the 2010 annual conference for principals, the Education Minister, Anne Tolley, when attempting to quell dissension about the introduction of national standards, reportedly, “told hundreds of principals to be quiet, do as they are told, and that national standards were staying (A3-2)”. Tolley argued that the national standards would provide benchmarks to indicate where action is needed and inform the next steps in teaching and learning. There is little doubt that both the principals and Tolley were intent on improving schools to make for ‘effective’ practice and better outcomes. However, timely consideration of research-based evidence of effectiveness might better inform policy and reform (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004c; Slavin, 2010; B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005).

Further impact and wider support

As governments make moves to increase regulations and the accountability of teachers and schools, compliance and the burden of administration reduce teachers’ time to conduct their primary task of teaching (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). These types of pressures, with little or no visible increase in financial support to sustain the implementation of such changes

can place a further burden on school staff. The drive for best practice needs to be considered in terms of wider agencies supporting change. Kemmis and Grooenboer (2008) argue that the onus for better or effective practice cannot be solely placed on teachers. There needs to be long-term strategies of better resourcing, better universities with improved teacher education, better funding and better support and regard for and valuing of teachers. Duffy and Hoffman (2002) when summing up important messages from studies on effective schools and accomplished teachers in the United States concur with Kemmis and Grooenboer, recommending that improved teacher education must be prioritised. They all stress that learning is ongoing and resources and research must focus not only pre-service teacher education but also career-long professional development.

While the understandings and debate around measuring ‘effectiveness’ continue, sound pedagogical practice in reading (and learning in general) is to assess, monitor and identify the individual student’s needs and use that data to provide learning opportunities to build and develop understandings (see, for example, Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Klenowski, 2009; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006; Pressley, 2002b; Ruddell, 2004; B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). As B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2005), Ruddell (2004) and Slavin (2010) advocate, research-based practices should inform and guide effective practices in reading and inform policy. However, cognisance needs to be taken of Duffy and Hoffman’s (2002) caution, discussed earlier, about the criterion or criteria used to define ‘effectiveness’ and the need to use a range of types of measures.

Investigations of effective schools

Hoffman (1991) in his landmark paper documents early research investigations during the 1970s and 1980s on effective schools, predominantly in the United States. The attributes of effective schools include high expectations by the teachers, a positive and safe learning environment, frequent monitoring of student progress, effective leadership and practices, sustained curriculum improvement and positive home school partnerships. However, he identifies shortcomings of research at that time. Firstly, there was a preoccupation with using quantitative, positivistic, behaviourist approaches where numbers were used to provide ‘process-product, input-output paradigms (Hoffman, 1991, p 945)’. Next, there was a reliance on quantitative research paradigms, where in creating experimental conditions, the real processes involved in teaching students to read “become hopelessly distorted” (Hoffman, 1991, p 945). And finally, much research merely describes what was observed,

rather than providing explanations for what was observed and relating this to theoretical understandings.

Hoffman (1991) advises that future research into school and teacher effectiveness should be more focused on key theoretical issues, more thoughtful of the wider contextual factors and more flexible in the types of research methods used. A decade later, Duffy and Hoffman (2002) wrote the concluding chapter in B. M. Taylor and Pearson's edited book, *Teaching reading: Effective schools, accomplished teachers* (B. M. Taylor, et al., 2000). The book contains an overview of several U.S. research studies on effective schooling and exemplary teachers in reading which predominantly focus from kindergarten to grade 5. Several recurring factors are identified as supporting school 'effectiveness' in teaching reading across the studies. They include: early intervention for struggling readers; authentic learning tasks; the suggestion that the collaborative process of change occurs when there is a coherent plan that the participants own; that change is a longitudinal and dynamic process with one change leading to another change; and the sheer difficulty of implementing change.

Nonetheless, Duffy and Hoffman point out that overall in the studies on effective schools and exemplary teachers of reading, home-school relationships have been only superficially examined. They call for research that delves into the nature of the relationships between the school staff and the parents to understand how they are maintained and progressed. I argue that a fundamental principle underlying this should be to consider designing research which allows parents to voice their perceptions and understandings, rather than merely reporting it from the teacher's or principal's perspectives.

Studies on effective teachers of reading

In 1995-1996, Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Hampston and Echevarria were aware of the lack of research in the upper elementary grades. They undertook a study of ten nominated effective grade 4 and grade 5 teachers in the US (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 2006). The teachers were selected by participating school districts as being effective teachers of reading. Classroom observations occurred during the school year and there were two in-depth interviews with each of the teachers. In addition, they conducted a survey of nominated outstanding teachers across the US. Pressley and colleagues conclude that all teachers had a mixture of literature and skills instruction. But the observations of the ten teachers found great variability with the key instructional emphases. The researchers were

disturbed to find that they only rarely observed explicit comprehension teaching, particularly as comprehension instruction was expected to be a key activity in the upper elementary grades. These authors lament that the situation appeared similar to the landmark work of Durkin (1978-79) more than 20 years ago who documented the paucity of reading instruction inside classrooms and the very little evidence of reading comprehension instruction. Although these ten teachers were perceived as effective and nominated by the participating school districts there was a gap between what the researchers observed and research-based practice.

Soon after Pressley and colleagues' study in the US, Wray, Medwell, Poulson and Fox undertook two similar studies in the UK. The studies were part of a project that had been commissioned by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). Arguably, the findings from this research might be considered to be politically driven to meet the requirements of the research funder. Nevertheless, these studies add to our knowledge base. From 1996 to 1998, Wray and colleagues investigated the practices and beliefs of teachers identified as effective in teaching literacy. These have been reported in several publications (see, for example Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, & Wray, 2001; Wray, et al., 1999; Wray, Medwell, Fox, & Poulson, 2000; Wray, Medwell, Poulson, & Fox, 2002). The researchers wanted to understand the nature of effective teaching in reading and writing. In their literature search they found most studies on effective teaching consisted of addressing the wider curriculum rather than being specific to literacy learning. They investigated 228 primary teachers nominated as effective teachers of literacy. As discussed earlier, the teachers were recommended as effective by the local education authority, a check was done using external data including inspection reports, and their principals were asked if they agreed to the teachers being nominated as effective (Poulson, et al., 2001). Additionally, they had a validation sample of 71 teachers not identified as effective. There was a mix of teachers from key stage one and key stage two, which encompasses students from school entry until 11 years of age. The teachers completed a questionnaire about their practices, professional development experiences and beliefs about literacy teaching approaches. There was a 59 per cent response rate to the questionnaire. The study led by Poulson (Poulson, et al., 2001) reports on the exploratory study using this questionnaire but is set in the context of the wider study led by Wray (Wray, et al., 2000).

From this sample, Wray and colleagues selected a sub sample comprising of 26 teachers identified as effective, and 10 teachers not identified as effective. However, there was no indication how the subsample of 26 effective teachers was selected from the larger group of 228 effective teachers who had been nominated by advisory staff. Each of the teachers in both the subsample groups was observed teaching twice and after the observation was interviewed about the teaching episode. This study led by Wray and colleagues (including Poulson) used predominantly qualitative data, whilst the questionnaire study led by Poulson and colleagues (including Wray) was quantitative.

The research found a number of key issues. Firstly, the data from the questionnaire found that effective teachers who had the highest level of qualification at Master's level were more positive about whole language theories rather than a phonic orientation. Possibly, I suggest this may be more indicative of the era in which the research took place where the phonics versus whole language debate was more avidly a matter of contention. Also, Master's level teachers may read more widely. Poulson points out that the Master's qualification of these teachers may not have been gained in literacy, but even so it might indicate a greater knowledge about theories surrounding teaching and learning. Additionally, the data showed no significant difference between those who were literacy leaders within their schools, in their theoretical orientation, in comparison to the other respondents.

The qualitative data predominantly from the study lead by Wray and colleagues found that teachers' beliefs, practice and knowledge of the subject were necessary to provide a coherent approach to teaching literacy. Also, the teachers contended that the purpose of the lesson needed to be made explicit. They had well developed systems of monitoring students' progress and these data were used to plan further teaching. The teachers made their reason for teaching certain aspects of literacy clear to the students. Finally, a common characteristic of the effective teachers was that they had been involved in literacy professional development and/or led it within their school. This study provides useful insights into UK primary teachers' beliefs and practice in reading, but examines it only from the role of the teacher and their perspectives. Parents, home-school relationships and students' perspectives were not included, which I contend assumes that the responsibility of supporting reading lies with the teacher and the school, rather than viewing literacy learning as socially situated.

B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole (2000) in their study on effective schools and accomplished teachers use empirical data to investigate exemplary teaching of accomplished teachers of reading. They purposively selected 14 schools across the US. Eleven of the 14 schools had some type of intervention programme in place to support reading development. The other three schools were nominated by district administrators as they had achieved some intervention reform and met the criteria of the research in terms of student achievement in reading. They observed and interviewed teachers and interviewed the principals. Children in the first four years of their schooling, from Kindergarten level to Grade 3 (five to eight years of age), were tested on a range of measures relevant to their grade level at school both in fall and in spring. Statistically significant school factors emerged. These included systematic use of assessment data to monitor student progress; strong parent links and home communication; time spent in small group instruction; and high levels of on-task behaviour. However, I maintain that the findings in regards to parent links and home communication can only be interpreted from the perspectives and understandings of the teachers and principals. No parents were interviewed or surveyed. The focus was on students in the early years of schooling. Although the findings possibly may be applicable to 11- to 13-year-old students, further research in this age range, later in schooling, would add to our knowledge base.

The three studies discussed focus on students up to the age of 11 years of age, but there appears to be a dearth of research on effective teachers of reading for students during their young adolescent years, namely 11- to 13-year-old students. This may be largely because children in many countries transfer to secondary school at age 11 and do not receive explicit teaching in reading after the transfer. Arguably, as students reach the early years of adolescence, what has been regarded as effective practice in teaching reading may need to be readjusted to better meet the needs of these students. The characteristics and strategies that teachers of reading use for these young adolescent students may well differ in type and implementation. Sound reading skills are critical at this stage of students' education, particularly as the ability to read underpins success in most secondary subject areas.

Nevertheless, there is one research project conducted by Langer (2004) in a range of middle and high schools across four states in the US. In the five-year longitudinal study she focused on the characteristics of pedagogical practices that support achievement in reading, writing and English. The design of the predominantly observational research was nested multi-case

where each English programme included both teachers and students as informants. The study focused on how teachers, within their school setting, strive to improve literacy outcomes. The schools were nominated by recommendations from university and school communities within the four states. Each school had a minimum of three independent nominations and had been selected on the concept that the school was viewed ‘as places where professionals were working in interesting ways to improve students’ performance and test scores in English (p.1047).’ However, no guidelines with criteria to make this assumption were evident, which questioned how subjective the nominations might have been depending on an individual’s interpretation of terms such as ‘interesting ways’ to improve students’ performance. Forty-four teachers and 88 classes from 25 schools, including 528 student informants participated in the study. Interviews and observations formed the main means of gathering data.

Field researchers were used to gather the data. The selection for these researchers was not alluded to, neither was what measures were taken to ensure that prior to gathering the data the field researchers were working from a joint perspective. However, there were ongoing meetings and emails amongst the research team during the study. In reporting the study, the findings tend to be asserted rather than consistently backed up with qualitative data. The study found that in the higher performing schools, skills were taught in multiple types of lessons and tests were deconstructed to shape instruction and curriculum. This, would appear to be evidence of teaching to the test. The study also found that classrooms were organized to encourage collaboration and shared cognition, though what is meant by this term of ‘shared cognition’ is not fully explained. Hall and Harding (2003) also noted this omission in their review of this research.

Reviews of research

In 2003 in the UK, Hall and Harding (2003) published a systematic review of research into effective literacy teaching. The review aimed to appraise and synthesise research on effective literacy teaching for students from four to 14 years of age. The UK Teacher Training Agency commissioned and supported the review of research to improve teaching and learning using research and evidence. Using a self-determined selection criteria 12 studies were analysed. The studies selected “were those deemed to be of most direct relevance to the Teacher Training Agency (p. 2).” This problematises the review’s findings as arguably they may be politically driven to meet the requirements of the research funder rather than an impartial analysis of the wider data available. Putting this aside, Hall and Harding conclude that

although there is no single criterion to identify an outstanding teacher of literacy, there are a cluster of components which appear to be linked to effective teaching of literacy. There were several common themes identified that effective teachers implemented. They balanced direct skills instruction with contextually grounded, authentic literacy activities. Also, they integrated different aspects of literacy so students can talk and write about what they have read. They developed a classroom environment where students were highly engaged in their learning and worked independently with task-oriented conversations. This was supported by excellent classroom management with maximum time and opportunities created for learning. In these positive classroom environments students were working co-operatively with a 'can do' approach encouraged. The students had been taught to be organised and efficient in their use of time.

Furthermore, the teachers provided scaffolding of learning and regularly monitored students' progress. They talked to students in a conversational style rather than interrogational. The teachers had strong professional beliefs about literacy and showed determination in demonstrating their passion for literacy to their students. The wider school environment had supported these teachers in their professional learning. Finally, in Hall and Harding's most highly rated study by B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole (2000) they found that strong links with parents and community were significant. They did not point out that this view came only from those working in the school context or give any rationale for excluding seeking the parents' perceptions regarding the strength of the home-school links. Hall and Harding recommend that teachers, student teachers, literacy advisors, the school inspectorate and teacher educators need to be aware of these findings to further improve practice. However, they suggest further research needs to be undertaken in the UK context as the majority of the studies selected were from the U.S.

In a more recent review of contemporary research on effective elementary (kindergarten to grade 6) literacy teachers, Williams and Baumann (2008) select studies published from 1990 to 2007. The authors define effective literacy teachers as those who showed the greatest ability to improve students' literacy achievement. The research studies in their review included nominations of effective teachers who were investigated using tools such as surveys, interviews and observations. Williams and Baumann conclude that effective elementary teachers have high yet reasonable expectations of their students and recognise that learning is social and structure the learning to capitalize on the interaction amongst the

students. Also, effective teachers organise the learning to encourage independence so students can self-monitor and apply and correct literacy activities. They integrate instruction across the subject areas providing texts from a range of genres. Other strategies that effective teachers use were: they teach fundamental reading skills explicitly, model how to problem-solve, promote higher order comprehension, utilise small group instruction to teach students at the most appropriate level, are adaptable in their instructional approaches and encourage risk-taking. Additionally, in their interaction with students they more frequently use intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic, they support student-to-student and student-to-teacher dialogue, they demonstrate enthusiasm for learning and teaching and they show empathy and compassion in understanding the student in both the home and school context.

However, Williams and Baumann when discussing the limitations of the research studies they analysed conclude that although many of the recent studies included classroom observations it is important to corroborate findings using a wider range of data. They advocate that this could include “other qualitative data, such as teacher, administrator, student, and parent interviews (2008, p. 368).” By listening to the perceptions and experiences of a wider range of participants with roles that can impact on students’ literacy achievement and motivation to read and learn, researchers can report on the wider systemic area of effective teaching of reading.

Studies of schools that were undergoing school reform/professional development

Several studies have been undertaken of schools involved in sustained professional development in reading. These studies provide insights into ‘effective’ reading programmes across a range of class levels. I will outline a selected sample of influential studies from the US, Canada, New Zealand and the UK.

US and Canadian professional development studies

The ‘Success for All’ programme (Borman, et al., 2007; J. Chamberlain, Daniels, Madden, & Slavin, 2007; Madden & Slavin, 2010; Slavin, 2010) which started in the 1980s has been implemented in high poverty elementary and middle U.S. schools. In 2010, this included over 1000 schools in 47 states. The basic elements of the programme include school-wide achievement monitoring and goal setting, one-to-one tutoring, and regrouping students across classrooms and class levels. This is supported by ongoing professional development

within the school, led by a lead teacher. These school-wide strategies to improve learning were based on research evidence of effectiveness. For example, Slavin (2010) when discussing meta-findings from a review of 100 studies found that instructional process strategies such as cooperative learning, goal setting, teacher feedback, meta-cognitive skills along with sound classroom management were effective in raising reading achievement. These key areas were embedded in the daily classroom routines and instruction of the 'Success for All' programme (J. Chamberlain, et al., 2007). Madden and Slavin (2010) reported that in the 'Success for All' programme, using standardized measures of testing reading, students made significant gains, not only during the interventions (in grades 4 and 5) but also after the treatment (in grades 6 and 7). The students' progress was compared against control groups. Possible biases in the control group may have influenced the results. Nonetheless, quantitative data is relied on heavily to substantiate the success of this programme. The perspectives of multiple stakeholders would add a richer dimension to assessing the value of the programme.

The 'Success for All' programme is prescriptive. To encourage teacher 'buy-in', school staff members have to vote if they want to implement the programme, with a minimum of 75 per cent acceptance. However, once implemented the imposed structure of the programme provides for minimal professional autonomy. Stahl (2002) when discussing effective schools that improve reading in relation to the 'Success for All' programme stated that 'school change must grow from within, rather than be imposed from without (viii)'. Arguably, a prescriptive programme voted in by 75 per cent or more of teachers has not been imposed. However, I maintain that a sustained and effective professional development that allows a school to develop a professional development programme that fits the culture and specific needs of their school community may be a preferable option for many teachers rather than a 'one recipe for success' model.

In other US research on school reform to improve effectiveness in high poverty schools B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2005) selected 13 schools across the U.S. The purpose of the study was to identify classroom and school level elements that impacted on school effectiveness characteristics in professional development and reading achievement. Eight of the schools were in the second year of a school reform initiative while the remaining five were in the first year. In research that focused on the teachers and students from grade 2 to 5, teachers were interviewed and observed. The students were tested in reading and

writing at four time-points across the two years of the study. The achievement results showed small cumulative gains across the two years. They report that the more extensively a school change process was implemented, the greater the improvement in students' reading comprehension and fluency. Also, the research established that sustained school improvement over the two years was more effective. The schools that lacked principal support in the reform change process or lacked teacher 'buy-in' to the changes had not been accomplishing goals set. At a school level, they conclude assessment data should be used to inform teaching and improve practices, teachers and principals should engage in collaborative professional development, and teachers and the principal need to work collaboratively together with a model that puts the students' needs first. At a class level, they suggest that teachers need to be reflective of their practices, implement research-based practices which encourage high-order cognitive tasks and retain high expectations of students. This study provides indicators of effective school leadership and teacher practices to support reading outcomes for students in grades 2 to 5 who were in low-income schools in the United States.

Foster (2005) undertook a study to explore the relationship between leadership and successful schooling in two Canadian secondary schools. The schools were selected because they had been involved over several years in school improvement and they had a positive reputation among community and school members. However, unfortunately Foster does not outline what criteria and with whom she consulted in her assumption that the schools had positive reputations. Nevertheless, in her study she investigates the perspectives of principals and other school staff in the two secondary schools that had implemented school improvement plans. Her aim was to understand how leadership is practised and what the perceived link was between school improvement and leadership. The research investigation which comprised of three stages took place over eight months. In the first two stages data were collected, analysed and report writing occurred. This included individual and focus group interviews with the principals, assistant principals, teachers, students, and parents. Unlike many of the prior studies discussed, Foster's inclusion of parents and students as research participants provided a refreshing perspective in understanding the wider systemic issues that influence schooling.

Other sources of data she collected were observations of classrooms and school activities, and analysing documents, such as the school handbook and newsletters. During the third

stage of her investigation, themes that emerged were analysed and implications for research and policy were identified. The study found that leadership in school that focuses on improved learning outcomes can come from a variety of people within the school rather than those with designated leadership roles such as the principal. The educator respondents suggested that there were many sources of leadership and this should be shared to varying degrees particularly when setting school-wide goals and plans for overall school improvement. They also agreed that on-going professional development was crucial to sustain success. Foster's inclusion of parents and students in her study provides us with a wider perspective. Interestingly, she found that the parent and student understandings and construction of school improvement and leadership were significantly different from what she termed the "highly consensual views of the educator respondents" (pp. 49-50).

The teacher and principal educators perceived that they had included both the parents and students in decision making and goal setting for the improving outcomes at the school. But indeed, this was not the perception of the parents and students who described how they felt excluded in decisions relating to school improvement. Even though there had been attempts to consult the students and parents, they viewed that in reality the teachers and principal were the decision-makers. Here, Foster's finding of what the educators perceived as happening was not the reality from the perspectives of the clients within the education system, namely the parents and students. This raises an important message for researchers. Although Foster's research was set in secondary schools and it was not related specifically to literacy outcomes, it does illuminate the importance of listening to the voices of students and their parents. Other researchers would be well advised to take note of their inclusion of parents. For example, in B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole's (2000) study of schools that were effective in teaching literacy discussed earlier, these authors claimed that an important factor included strong links between the home and school. This is a bold statement to make considering no parents were interviewed or surveyed. Arguably, there may have been close links between the home and school but without seeking the perceptions of the parents on the quality of the links between the school and the home, the finding is questionable. If we are to truly understand the wider systemic issues surrounding what is happening in schooling, then at the very least those who are recipients of the education system, students and their parents, need to be included in research investigations about schooling. Foster calls for further research to address what she terms the 'blank spots' of our understandings about the role of leadership in schools and how it can contribute to school improvement.

New Zealand professional development studies

In New Zealand, between 2004 and 2005, Timperley and Parr (2007) have been involved both as researchers and as members of the professional development leadership team investigating 91 primary schools involved in a national literacy professional development programme. Reading achievement data using Supplementary Test for Reading (STAR; Elley, 2001) were collected from 3,787 students. Qualitative data were collected from a representative group of 14 research schools. This included interviews with the principals, senior management and three teachers in each of the 14 schools. Interviews with visiting facilitators were conducted. Sixteen sessions of facilitator feedback to the teachers were audio-taped, including follow up teacher interviews to ascertain the extent of learning. Facilitators completed a questionnaire and were audio-taped during follow-up discussion. Five volunteers were interviewed to identify any change in facilitator learning or practices. The leadership team and the facilitator development were observed. Finally, Ministry of Education personnel were interviewed to understand reasons for policy changes.

The research found that for using STAR reading assessments ($n=3,787$) there were substantive gains ($ES= +0.87$) over the two years of the project. Problems that occurred during the implementation were seen as a joint problem solving process. Feedback and reflective practice amongst those at all levels of the educational system supported teachers in improving outcomes for students. Ongoing learning from the project found that an expectation developed over time that everyone needed to learn, including the principals, policy makers, facilitators and the project leaders. This research investigation presents not only quantitative data, but also qualitative data from a range of stakeholders during the literacy professional development process thus providing a more complete and fuller portrait of the process (Greene, Kreider, & Mayer, 2005).

McNaughton, Lai and colleagues have been involved in longitudinal research studies on accelerating reading achievement in low socioeconomic, culturally diverse areas in New Zealand where there are higher percentages of Māori and Pasifika students (see, for example, McNaughton, et al., 2007; McNaughton, Lai, Amituanai-Tolosa, & Ferry, 2008; McNaughton, et al., 2004; McNaughton, Phillips, & MacDonald, 2003). In a more recent paper, Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Tolosa, Turner and Hsiao (2009) reported on their three-year study of interventions in six, low socioeconomic schools that were focusing on raising

the achievement of students in the middle school years. The research was in collaboration with the schools and the Ministry of Education. It aimed to raise reading comprehension by involving teachers in critical discussion using teacher observation and achievement data and linking research-based practices to the specific needs identified in the schools. A key principle of McNaughton's ongoing work is that professional development needs to be culturally located, reflecting students' local and wider cultural identities (Lai, et al., 2009; McNaughton, 2002). From 2003 to 2005, the research collected data from two overlapping groups of students. One group ($n=1,975$) consisted of all students present at start of the study. The second group comprised of three cohorts, each beginning initially in Years 4, Year 5 and Year 6. Eighty-seven per cent of the students were from Pasifika communities. As discussed in Chapter One, in New Zealand, Pasifika students have overall been underachieving in reading (Crooks, et al., 2009).

During the first year of the study, classroom observations of reading sessions in a sample of 15 classes were conducted. Trained observers used 'in situ' running records and tape recordings to focus on the components of a reading session. In the second year systematic observations using video recordings were conducted. Although levels of engagement overall were high and routines were well established there were areas that were identified that could further enhance learning. These included high rates of explicit instruction by the teachers and instances when students were confused about the goals of the tasks. They also noted that the teachers were dominant with extended questioning frequently using Initiation Response and Evaluation (IRE) sequences (Cazden, 2001). Cazden argued that the teacher should expand on students' answers to encourage them to view the situation in a different way, instead of evaluating the responses of the student.

In Lai and colleagues' study repeated measures, twice a year for three years, were collected using Supplementary Test for Reading (STAR; Elley, 2001) and the revised Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) in reading (Reid & Elley, 1991). The professional development continued in three phases over the three years. It was targeted and adapted to meet developing needs as the research progressed. There were substantive gains over the three years with stanine effect sizes of $d=+0.62$. However the growth over the three years was not linear but more staircase in shape, with a 'summer effect'⁵ over the long school holiday

⁵ In New Zealand there is a long holiday break over summer of approximately six weeks from prior to Christmas up until the start of the years teaching in early February.

break. The contextualising of the professional development to fit with the local achievement data and the cultural and linguistically diverse needs of the students increased the integrity and relevance of the professional development. Unlike the ‘Success for All’ programme (Madden & Slavin, 2010; Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008) discussed earlier, a formulaic, instructional package was not presented, rather there was fine-tuning of the processes during sustained professional development to best meet the learning needs of these culturally diverse students. McNaughton, Lai and colleagues work aligns with Duffy and Hoffman’s (2002) call for research on effective schools and teaching in literacy learning to be more thoughtful of the wider contextual factors.

UK study on professional development to promote effective teaching of reading

Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell and Safford’s (2009) work in the UK project Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers investigated new pathways and more inclusive practices to effective pedagogy in teaching reading. A sample of 27 schools was recruited opportunistically because of a perceived need or interest in a reading for pleasure programme. They included infant, junior and primary schools in a range of local authorities in the UK. Forty-three teachers took part in the research. Each of the 43 teachers selected three children in their class who were perceived as disaffected or reluctant readers. Additionally, a random subsample of 10 case studies was selected across the local authorities to gain a richer picture of the impact of changes in the reading for pleasure programme. At the 10 case study schools, 17 teachers and 49 children were investigated. Over a one-year period, they used a range of data collection tools. These included: information from baseline and end of project surveys and a wide range of pro forma data from the teachers’ portfolios. The data collection from the 10 case study schools included semi-structured teacher interviews, head teacher interviews; semi-structured group interviews with the students; and structured observations of reading related classroom activities. The research found that the teachers were encouraged to widen their reading repertoires and personally read outside their comfort zone. This included reading comics, poetry, non-fiction and fiction, junk mail, sports reports, magazines and material downloaded from the web. The teachers used the children’s literature, or extracts from it, as a teaching resource when planning units and when taking whole class or guided reading. The research found that a love of reading for pleasure was re-kindled. Teachers made a cultural shift and became aware of students’ reading habits in the home. There was more frequent talk about and around reading. Stronger links were made

between the local libraries and the school. Although not setting out to show that reading for pleasure might impact on reading achievement, the data returned from 61 reluctant readers demonstrated a considerable improvement over the period of the project.

The teachers over the year acknowledged family, cultural and community influences on children's reading. This knowledge informed their pedagogy and encouraged connections and synergy between teachers', children's and parents' reading lives. The Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers programme linked the children's world to their reading programme in the school. It developed a 'reading for relevance' agenda that worked for these previously disaffected and reluctant readers. Undoubtedly, when researchers and teachers, listen to the voices of the students, as in this study, a framework of understanding develops that enables educational decision-makers to advance learning outcomes for children. In New Zealand, the work of Bishop et al. (2003) has shown that teachers are often unaware of the major gap between teachers' intentions, teachers' beliefs of what is happening, and the reality of the student experience.

Summary of effective practices

Across these studies of effective teachers of literacy, and schools that were involved in literacy professional development, similar to Hall and Hardy's (2003) analyses of effective teachers, there was a collective cluster of components associated with practices identified as effective. There were two common features. Most significantly was the continued professional development in the teaching of reading where there was teacher 'buy in' and support by the principal. This change was a collaborative process that included a coherent plan which the school staff owned. The second common feature was that there appeared to be well-developed systems of monitoring students' progress and these data were used to plan further teaching. Across many of the studies, what was missing was discussion linked to students' cultural identities with this being reflected in teaching and interrelationships between the home and school.

Several other components clustered around the specific practices the teachers implemented. These included teachers having a strong knowledge about literacy, demonstrating a passion for literacy and teaching, integrating reading, writing and talking plus incorporating this across other curriculum areas, working with students in small groups, contextualising learning to meet the students' backgrounds and interests, and providing authentic learning

tasks. Additionally, effective teachers showed an awareness of conversation styles and the need for student-to-student talk, had high but realistic expectations of students with high levels of on-task behaviour in their classrooms, they reflected on their practices and used research-based practices particularly those that promote higher level thinking. This cluster of components that effective teachers of literacy implemented provides a sound structure to explore when investigating the five case study schools in this thesis.

Effective practices in supporting literacy learning comprise of a complex range of teacher attributes and beliefs about children and learning. What the research in this chapter does tell us is that when teachers are supported by effective whole-school sustained professional development (and this includes research-based evidence of effective practices) that sound practices to support literacy learning can be implemented. However, as Limbrick and Knight (2005) remind us when discussing school-wide professional development in New Zealand schools, teachers are key to this success. These authors suggest that improving teacher effectiveness in literacy learning can occur during process of professional development “when teachers become more confident in interrogating their practice and articulating outcomes” (Limbrick & Knight, 2005, p 21). This timely reminder demonstrates the critical role of the teacher and how structures of support and encouragement need to be put in place. With this type of support, teachers can be encouraged to be reflective practitioners who respond to feedback and thus continue to improve and adapt their practices to better meet the needs of all literacy learners. Nevertheless, as B. M. Taylor, et al. (2000) concluded in their overview of several US research studies on effective schooling and exemplary teachers in reading, change is a longitudinal and dynamic process with one change leading to another change. Coupled with this is the sheer difficulty of implementing change.

How the ideas discussed above influenced the present study

Given the continuing debate about what indicates ‘effectiveness’ and the use of testing to measure ‘effectiveness’, a sociocultural approach was sought. I wanted to develop a more collective and social interpretation of ‘effectiveness’ using a complementary process (Klenowski, 2009). Therefore for the purposes of my research investigation ‘effective’ was decided upon using four measures which was outlined in Chapter One. They were the nomination of schools perceived as effective by the research project’s advisory committee, the nomination of the effective teachers by their principal, the use of the school’s standardised test results in reading, and the reports from the Education Review Office

(ERO)⁶. Using this combination of measures fitted with Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell and Wray (2001) UK research study on effective teachers (discussed more fully subsequently). The UK teachers in their study were recommended as effective by the local education authority. As a second step, the researchers also checked available external data sources for evidence of effective teaching in literacy, including school inspection reports. Finally, these researchers spoke with the head teachers of the nominated teachers to inquire if they agreed that the person was effective in teaching literacy.

Chapter Three explores further theoretical frameworks that have informed this study. It looks particularly at sociocultural/constructivist and sociocognitive theories. The chapter contains illustrations of relevant research theories related to reading.

⁶ ERO is an organisation analogous to an inspectorate—to one that was making significant positive shifts in respect of all these matters in general and in student achievement in particular.

Chapter Three

Further theoretical frameworks informing the study

This chapter is devoted mainly to a description of the socio-cultural/constructivist and sociocognitive theories of learning to read. It includes a discussion of wider sociocultural theory and its implications for stakeholders in supporting a student's reading progress. Ruddell and Unrau's (2004a) sociocognitive theory of reading acquisition is outlined. Other recent theoretical positions and research related to reading skills, dialogic discourse, comprehension, scaffolding, attitudes to reading, relationship between attitudes towards reading and reading achievement, teacher efficacy, effective teaching, professional development and school leadership, parents' attitudes to and abilities in reading and home-school partnerships are described from a socio-cultural/constructivist and sociocognitive stance. The chapter concludes with a specific justification for the selection of socio-cultural/constructivist and sociocognitive theories of supporting students in learning to read.

Why is theory important to my thesis?

In this chapter I begin with an exploration of research that might explain the phenomenon of how the wider systemic environment interacts to support reading for young adolescent students. Here, I suggest that the development of theory will help frame how to consider this issue. As Neuman (2000) noted, theory connects the researcher's study to the immense amount of knowledge that other researchers have contributed. He suggested that theory does not remain static but develops and is open to revision. Indeed, understanding the role of theory in my study helped guide the investigation. By using predominantly qualitative research, I wanted to find out if my investigation might generate, verify or advance theory. I hoped that by my interacting with my research findings from the case study schools that I might be able to make significant progress in advancing a theory of how young adolescent students are supported by the wider systemic system in reading. In this study the research of others interweaved with the understanding and knowledge that my research generated and, in so doing, helped me develop a conceptual model for supporting reading for young adolescent students. This wider systemic, conceptual model for supporting 11- to 13-year-old students is unpacked and discussed in Chapter Twelve.

Theories of learning to read

Similar to completing a jigsaw puzzle, I have tried to piece together aspects or pieces of knowledge to provide a clearer picture of how the wider systemic environment supports 11- to 13-year-old students in their reading. During my analysis of the literature, I was unable to locate research that had specifically investigated supporting reading of 11- to 13-year-old students in a range of school types where a wider interactive systemic approach had been utilised. Therefore, as I unpacked the pieces of knowledge to build a framework for my thesis I explored an array of areas that intertwined and overlapped.

Much research about reading presents theoretical orientations that have focused on the processes a learner uses to read. For example, the ‘Simple View’ of reading (Hoover & Gough, 1990) focuses on reading comprehension, speed of automaticity in decoding and listening comprehension skills and posited that reading (comprehension) equals decoding multiplied by listening (comprehension). The ‘Connectionist approaches’ to reading considers the processes of learning as an incremental and slow development in knowledge that are represented by increasingly sound and accurate connections between the different units such as the phonemes in spoken words and the letters in corresponding printed words (Plaut, 2007). Such research that focuses on the acquisition of reading processes has tended to examine the student situated in a single context, often with the teacher in the classroom (see, for example, Clark & Graves, 2005; McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009; Poole, 2008) or with an examination of the results of interventions with student/s undertaken by the researcher/s (see, for example, Everatt, Smythe, Ocampo, & Gyarmathy, 2004; Gillon, 2007; Westerveld & Gillon, 2008). Alexander and Fox (2004) emphasise that, in the ‘era of engaged learning’ from 1996 to the present, there has been a change from viewing ‘reading’ as a field that relates to the early reading stages and struggling readers, to one that investigates and addresses issues pertinent to readers of all ages and abilities.

Although investigations on the acquisition of reading processes (as outlined above) add to our knowledge of the explicit teaching that supports reading development, particularly in the early stages, Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney (1975) when discussing learning and human development, argue that these types of investigations are limited in that they seldom include the adjacent systems that may influence what can or cannot occur within the specific context. I argue that the inter-relationships between the school principal and the teacher, parents and

the school, and the school leaders and wider national/state institutions are also critical to a student's reading development. These types of key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers and students, need to be considered and included when addressing the needs of literacy learners, particularly those of marginalised students. This aligns with the work of Friere and Macedo (1987) who explore the issues relating to literacy acquisition of oppressed peoples. I suggest, as these authors concluded, that the wider socio cultural environment, including governmental decisions and policies all impact on learning.

As Gee (1990) posits, literacy acquisition, including learning to read, is founded on access to two types of discourse: Primary Discourse which arises in the enculturation taking place within the family, church and local community; and secondary Discourse which occurs in public venues such as schools and workplaces. Primary Discourse is for social Discourses which integrate ways of talking, reading and writing during the enactment of situated activities and identities. Gee describes these identities of being-doing and gives examples such as gang members, upper middle class students or a special education students engaged in literacy activities (2004). As a result, literacy and language are cultural and political constructions which are socially contested, privileging some groups over others. For the developing reader, this nexus between the discourses of the home/community and the school need to be taken into account when examining and developing effective literacy learning environments. In my thesis I wanted to better understand these wider systemic issues that impact on learning to read. In particular, I wanted to explore the perceptions and experiences of the students and their parents from a range of school types and socio-economic areas. What were their lived realities of support for reading during the final years of primary schooling? I contend that in order to do this, the parents' and students' views and perceptions needed to be contextualised and the voices of the teachers, literacy leaders and principals needed to be part of building a more complete picture of the wider systemic environment.

Cullen (2002) advocates that students are best able to develop understandings within socially constructed interactions that offer experiences that have authenticity and meaning for them. I contend from my prior research (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afai, et al., 2006; Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afai, et al., 2009) with colleagues on barriers and supports for Pasifika students and their parents, that teachers who can link home and cultural experiences and knowledge to classroom learning provide an important bridge in the learning process. Aligning with the work of Alexander and Fox (2004) and Vygotsky (1978), this 'unschooled' or 'informal

knowledge' that students bring to the classroom learning environment can differ substantively in character to the 'school knowledge' that is more formally acquired. I concur with numerous authors (see, for example, Alexander & Fox, 2004; Henderson, 2008b; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a; Stanovich, 2004) who maintain that recognising this, and that students' prior and existing knowledge is a powerful influence on learning to read and in improving reading achievement. As many commentators, (Grenfell, 2009; Lai, et al., 2009; Macfarlane, 2010) have argued from a socio-cultural and social constructivist perspective, when students' respective cultures and family backgrounds are congruent with the culture of their schools and their teachers, they are more likely to succeed.

I contend that a reader's family and community, and to some extent the school, influence their sociocultural values and beliefs about reading and reading goals. A social constructivist view of reading acquisition is that it is created through exchanges with others (Cullen, 2002). Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical writings are central to such theoretical perspectives, in particular the identification of the zone of proximal development where teaching by fellow students and teachers is essential to extend new knowledge. In advancing these theoretical perspectives, Ruddell and Unrau (2004a) describe how reading should be conceptualised as a meaning-construction and meaning-negotiation process and thus view it from a sociocognitive perspective. They suggest that there are three key components as the reading process occurs. These are the reader; the teacher; and the text and classroom context. Two interconnected types of conditions influence the reader. Firstly, there are affective conditions which include personal sociocultural beliefs and values about reading and schooling, and a student's motivation to read. Secondly, there are the cognitive conditions which account for word-analysis skills, metacognitive strategies, text processing strategies, background knowledge of language and an understanding of classroom and social interactions. A reader's prior beliefs and knowledge, both affective and cognitive, provide a foundation for the reader to construct meaning and influence comprehension and the creation of knowledge.

The next component, as the reading process occurs, is the teacher's philosophy and instructional beliefs including their sociocultural beliefs and values, and motivation to engage students. These all influence teachers' instructional decision-making processes. The third component of the text and classroom context connects to the learning environment where the teacher and student commence the development of meaning construction, which draws on previous knowledge and beliefs. In this way, reading is a meaning-construction

process. There is an interface amongst the reader, the teacher and the text and the classroom context. Thus, a sociocognitive perspective of reading considers student's knowledge, socio-cultural background, motivation, features of the learning context and strategic abilities in relation to each other (Alexander & Fox, 2004).

Acquisition of reading

Pearson (2009a) suggests that a simpler view of reading is one where the reader, the text, and the context are seen as equal overlapping circles and comprehension occurs when the circles overlap. The meaning, says Pearson, is within the text, and the reader 'digs it out' and comprehends it. According to Pearson, the socio-cultural model of reading has the same three circles – reader, text, and context. However, in this case, the context circle is much larger and plays a more critical part, because comprehension is construed as a social and political action.

In New Zealand schools, the prevailing philosophy relative to literacy programmes aligns with a social constructivist view of learning. The New Zealand Ministry of Education text, *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8* (2006) draws on three related concepts for a theoretical basis. The socialisation model of literacy learning is where learners construct meaning in social and cultural settings. Secondly, a developmental perspective is where students in Years 5 to 8 are moving through physical, emotional, social and cognitive change yet deliberate and explicit teaching is still critical for them. And finally, there are individual yet multiple pathways of development, where the range of achievement by individual students during this time widens in a typical classroom. Thus, attainment of reading and writing is set within a holistic and word-balanced approach to meaningful communication of interaction between reader and text. Readers bring their own experiences and cultural knowledge to the text, including their understanding of language (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006). The Ministry of Education (2006) maintain that there is no single recipe for success to meet the needs of all learners, but rather teachers need to identify needs, as well as plan and adapt resources and teaching to the individual needs within their classes. In this textbook for years 5 to 8, guided reading is described as focused instruction in a small group setting and is seen as having a central role in supporting reading. The teacher, using increasingly complex texts at a level appropriate for the group of students, gives strategic instruction to encourage critical thinking and make meaning of the text. The Ministry of Education states that the role of the teacher is to "encourage students to ask their own

questions of the text, to discover answers to their questions ... engage in genuine conversations with students and encourage such conversations among them” (p. 107).

This view of learning, where discussion-based instructional approaches encourage the dialogic potential of children, acknowledges the inherent social and cultural dynamics in group discussions aligns with commentators such as Au (1998) and Daniels (2001). Underpinning social constructivism is the development of children’s knowledge, ideas and values, which are shaped through the multi-dimensional interactions that occur when discussing and debating text with others and, from there, honing one’s own thoughts (Cambourne, 2002; Ma, 2008; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Approaches commonly used in literacy education, such as shared and guided reading, acknowledge that the co-construction of knowledge is not restricted to multiple individual contributions, but also grows out of participation in joint activity (Cullen, 2002; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006).

As A. Davis (2007a) maintained, teachers need to deliberately and actively involve their students in the process of learning to read so as to provide a strong platform for student achievement, and the findings in my thesis support this. Authentic and rich texts facilitate such learning. These texts are those that motivate and challenge students as readers, draw on and affirm social and cultural identities, and relate to their interests (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006; Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, & O'Regan, 2009; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006). In addition to access to rich texts, teachers require a strong pedagogical knowledge base and expertise to work effectively with diverse learners (See, for example, Alton-Lee, 2003; Au, 2002; A. Davis, 2007a; McNaughton, et al., 2007).

Reading skills

Learning to read is a multifaceted act that involves motivation to learn and the acquisition of a range of skills and strategic behaviours (Hoffman, 2009). Paris (2009) and Paris and Hamilton (2009) refer to alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness and oral reading fluency as *constrained* skills that have rapid growth and need to be taught in the first two years of schooling to give children a fast start to reading. Several researchers argue that, a key issue in learning to read is decoding words accurately and quickly, which leads to oral reading fluency (see, for example, Gillon & McNeill, 2010; Pressley, 2006). The ‘Simple View’ of reading (see, for example, Hoover & Gough, 1990) posits that growth in reading comprehension is linked to improvements in the automaticity of decoding, along with

increases in language and cognitive abilities and listening comprehension skills. According to Paris and Hamilton (2009) and Hoffman (2009) this view does not take into account three aspects: comprehending of texts that are less linear in structure; ‘how’ and ‘when’ reading comprehension develops; and the types of instruction that foster improvements in comprehension. The suggested link between reading fluency and comprehension may only be correlational, in that a child who can read fluently may be better situated to comprehend text, but reading fluency alone does not guarantee comprehension of text. Nevertheless, fluent word recognition is an essential requirement for successful reading comprehension (Paris & Hamilton, 2009; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

In contrast to *constrained* skills, the *unconstrained* skills of comprehension and vocabulary knowledge develop over longer periods of time (Paris & Hamilton, 2009). Paris and other researchers contend that they need to be explicitly taught with direct instruction (see, for example, Liang & Dole, 2006; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006; Paris, 2009) from the early years of reading acquisition. This increases in relevance when students move into reading more complex text later in their primary or elementary schooling. Comprehending more complex text occurs with repeated interactions, where the intended meaning of the text is debated and interpreted (Paris, 2005, 2009).

Dialogue and participation

Wilkinson (2010) argues that there should be a shift to dialogue and participation by students in comprehension instruction where multiple voices act together to debate text providing approaches that foster divergent ideas. Doyle and Bramwell (2006) describe dialogic reading as including multiple readings and conversations, with teachers using strategic questioning about texts and responding to students in small groups. They contend that children also benefit socially from taking turns and listening to others. According to Nystrand (2006) through small group-work, dialogic discourse provides an epistemic environment for literacy development to occur. During this dialogic discourse there is a shift from the authoritative discourse to one where students interact with each other to co-construct their understandings together and consider different points of view (Conley, 2009; Soter, et al., 2008). I suggest that this shift from authoritative discourse could begin to be introduced in the early years of schooling with children learning to be involved in co-operative and collaborative learning activities.

Sociocultural learning theory aligns with this view of learners working together discussing and debating their differing understandings of text and acknowledges the key roles of the teacher and peers in facilitating individual learning (Galda & Beach, 2004; Nystrand, 2006; Pearson, 2009b; Vygotsky, 1978). For this type of dialogic discourse to occur the learning culture within the classroom may need to change and the teacher may need to step back from the often authoritative role, to one where students can take a lead in the meaning-negotiation processes (Soter, et al., 2008). To enhance our knowledge of the significant factors that affect teachers' instructional orientation and reader's development, Ruddell and Unrau (2004b, p. 975) have called for further research exploring:

What effects does a teacher's orientation toward authority and its role in meaning negotiation in classrooms have on reader's comprehension and motivation? For example, do teachers who practice a teacher-directed style have a different impact on meaning negotiation and level of reader engagement from those teachers who consider the classroom community as the center of authority?

I argue that sociocognitive theory acknowledges this overlap between the teacher, the reader and the text and classroom context and challenges educators to develop practices and learning environments which encourage collaboration in the joint construction of meaning.

Comprehension

Understanding why some students are good at comprehending and why others encounter difficulties helps reflective practitioners to develop strategies and programmes to support the development of comprehension skills. For example, Aaron, Joshi and Quatroche (2008) argue that the four main reasons why students encounter reading comprehension difficulties are: poor vocabulary knowledge; inadequate word recognition strategies; inadequate background knowledge or schema from which they are interpreting the text; and poor use of strategies that optimise comprehending. When looking at the strategies that good readers implement, Van Keer (2004) found that they monitor comprehension while they read, have a range of strategies to deal with comprehension failures, (e.g. rereading, adjusting reading speed, using background knowledge) and have an awareness of whether they have comprehended text or not. Wilkinson (2010) and Dymock (2010) maintain that there is little doubt that teaching students a small repertoire of comprehension strategies can be effective (e.g. questioning; summarising; activating background knowledge; creating mental images; and developing an awareness of text structure).

Pearson (2009a) when discussing reading in the middle years, emphasises that teachers need to give students a chance to construct and revise their current mental model by beginning with general probes, such as, “What is going on here?” and following this up with invitations for clarification by using specific probes. Pearson (2009a) and Paris (2009) contend that as students move into their middle and upper years of primary schooling, to be an effective reader they need to have a full set of strategies and skills to use when things just don’t happen automatically. This development of reading skills and verbal reasoning develop over time and need teacher support and scaffolding (Moats, 2004a).

For this to happen the relationships between the teacher and the reader are critical if collaborative and productive discussions are to take place in a manner that is focused and structured but not teacher dominated (Soter, et al., 2008). Teachers need to take this into account by providing opportunities for groups of learners to work together constructing, discussing and debating their differing understandings of text (Cullen, 2002; McKeown, et al., 2009). This dialogic process with interactions amongst the members of a group provides opportunity for high level reasoning and sustained and negotiated interpretations of text (Soter, et al., 2008). During small group reading teachers can use probes, following questions to move discussion to deeper levels and encourage students to seek out and build on the author’s ideas and draw on prior experiences and knowledge (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007; Soter, et al., 2008).

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a strategy that teachers can use to support and prompt reasoning from students (Soter, et al., 2008). Vygotsky (1978) suggested that students learn in collaboration with an expert. Over time, the area between what a child needs support with and completing the task independently – what Vygotsky referred to as the zone of proximal development – diminishes and the child can engage in the process alone. This aligns with Pearson’s (2009b) model of the gradual release of responsibility as teachers change from teacher modelling and direct teaching to guiding practice using scaffolding, releasing more responsibility and independence to the student.

Scaffolding is informed by a social-constructivist view of learning which takes account of the wider social cultural areas of learning (Bourdieu, 1991). According to sociocultural theory, originating from the work of Vygotsky (1978), the social and cultural background

and prior knowledge and assumptions of students influence learning (Soter, et al., 2008). In order to connect the classroom to what is happening in a student's world, pedagogies that are underpinned by scaffolding and supportive relationships can make use of the cultural and intellectual resources of students and set off detailed forms of reasoning (Cumming-Potvin, 2007; Soter, et al., 2008). Scaffolding allows a learner to work out a problem, undertake a task or accomplish a goal which they would not be able to complete unassisted and can assist learners to complete a task with less stress or in less time, or to understand it more fully (Graves & Graves, 2003; D. Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Some commentators contend that when a teacher explicitly teaches students strategies to foster reading independence, motivates and supports students with differing text types, and progressively releases and transfers the responsibility to the learner for initiating and applying strategic activities, scaffolding of reading comprehension occurs (see, for example, Clark & Graves, 2005; Pearson, 2009b).

Attitudes towards reading

Many of the practitioners and researchers concerned with how children acquire and develop reading skills view attitudes towards reading as part of a wider construct of motivation to read. Two such researchers, Sainsbury and Schagen (2004, p. 374), provide what they call a preliminary working definition of attitudes to reading. Such attitudes, they say, involve “intrinsic motivation in the form of a positive self-concept as a reader, a desire and tendency to read and a reported enjoyment of or interest in reading” (p. 374). However, they argue that this definition does not take into account the emotional engagement that children can have with literature. They go on to say that as children become more and more engaged in literature they are more likely to use their imaginations, a development that allows them to move into other worlds. This advance, in turn, tends to extend the children's social and personal development.

Byrne (2007) concurs. According to her, a decline in motivation to read can have deleterious effects on the ongoing acquisition of reading. She also identifies points along the pathway to reading mastery when this decline can set in. She explains that when children encounter the need to learn a new reading-related process or skill, their determination to learn it can be blocked by various factors, such as difficulty with decoding words or reading material that does not interest the reader. Byrne refers to these blocks as “points of discouragement”. She suggests that when children are unable to successfully address these blocks along the way,

they can lose confidence in their ability to read, which sets them on a vicious cycle of anxiety and defeatism relative to reading. Unfortunately, says Byrne, we know little about how learners negotiate their way through these points of discouragement. However, as other commentators (Cremin, et al., 2009; Crooks, et al., 2009; Twist, et al., 2007) indicate, there is a need for this understanding given relatively recent data which show that, in many countries, including England and New Zealand, the attitudes that children in the middle and upper years of primary schooling hold towards reading have changed in recent years. This is most notably in terms of declining interest in reading, with an associated decline in reading for pleasure and enjoyment.

Of concern, both within New Zealand and internationally is that students' engagement in reading decreases as they move into adolescence (Alspaugh, 1998; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). I suggest that countering this disengagement in reading of young adolescents is critical. Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007), in their study of leisure reading habits of adolescents, suggest that educators need to extend the reading community by providing adequate funds for school and classroom libraries and partnering with parents to promote leisure reading. Furthermore, in an analysis of engagement in reading of three countries in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Brozo, Shiel, & Topping (2007) discuss the more disadvantaged schools with high poverty levels. They suggest several possible solutions for students who have low levels of engagement in reading. These authors contend that students need a wide range of reading material including both hard copies and those in electronic form. They also suggest that the school library should have programmes that motivate and interest students and the school-level programmes should include approaches that monitor learning and enable the students to read with understanding and purpose. In the UK, Lockwood (2008) reminds us of the mounting evidence of several studies that British children no longer enjoy reading. He argues that the constraints for teachers of the National Literacy Strategy, instigated in 1998, and the later Primary National Strategy may have been factors contributing to this decline in reading for pleasure. In addition, students need to see themselves as part of a wider community where reading is valued and is a significant recreational activity (Strommen & Mates, 2004).

Relationship between attitudes towards reading and reading achievement

The PIRLS data from both England and New Zealand suggest a link between the amount of time that children spend reading for pleasure and their reading achievement (M.

Chamberlain, 2007b; Twist, et al., 2007). (This link, was not, however, consistently found across the other participating countries.) For example, of the New Zealand children who participated in PIRLS 2006, those who reported reading for fun at least once or twice a week generally achieved the higher reading scores on the PIRLS test of reading achievement (M. Chamberlain, 2008). However, approximately 20 per cent of the New Zealand children reported never reading for fun (M. Chamberlain, 2007b). Also, relative to the other countries that achieved overall high scores on the PIRLS test, New Zealand had a notable number of 10-year-old students who presented as poor readers (M. Chamberlain, 2007b). This finding aligns with the frequently cited fact that approximately 20 per cent of New Zealand students of middle and upper primary school age underachieve in reading (M. Chamberlain, 2007a; Hattie, 2003; Ministry of Social Development, 2004; New Zealand Parliament, 2008).

Some decline in attitudes to reading may be age-related as children move into the upper primary school (Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004), but this situation cannot be the whole picture, given the evidence from PIRLS (Twist, Gnaldi, Schagen, & Morrison, 2004; Twist, et al., 2007) and, more recently, NEMP (Crooks, et al., 2009), which shows a decline in New Zealand children's attitudes to reading within the same age groups. Considering that attitudes to reading and reading achievement appear to be closely aligned (M. Chamberlain, 2007a; Comparative Education Research Unit, 2007; Twist, et al., 2007), the continuing and widely reported plateau or dip in reading achievement as children move into their middle years of schooling both in New Zealand and internationally (Brozo, 2005; Brozo & Flynt, 2007; A. Farstrup, 2005; Hattie, 2007; Moss, 2005; Snow, 2002; Whitby, et al., 2006) may initially indicate some causal link between the drop in reading achievement and more recent declines in attitudes to reading. However, as Brozo (2005) notes, this phenomenon of a drop in reading achievement in the middle years of schooling was evident 30 years ago and has continued to be a concern since. Brozo and his colleague Flynt (2007), along with various other researchers (see, for example, McNaughton, et al., 2007; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), suggest that the reason for the dip may also be because teachers generally spend less time teaching reading (explicit teaching of reading comprehension in particular) at the higher levels of the primary school than they do at the lower.

Whether this decline in positive attitudes towards reading found in England and New Zealand is caused by the lack of school time available to explore reading for pleasure (Cremin, et al., 2009; Lockwood, 2008) or whether it is part of a more complex and global

trend in preferences for different types of reading material, such as digital, is worthy of consideration by educators. What can be said with certainty is that a multifarious layer of issues impinge on students' reading achievement and attitudes to reading in the later years of their primary schooling.

Teacher efficacy

Teachers are a critical link to students achieving in reading and learning (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2004; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a). I contend that teacher efficacy – the extent to which teachers believe they can affect student learning – plays an important part of the multiple layers when teasing out what can contribute to a whole school environment where students are achieving overall in reading. This critical link has long been recognised in research literature. For example, Bandura (1986) when discussing concepts of teacher efficacy suggests that the two factors influencing motivation are 'outcome expectations' which refer to one's expectations about the possible consequences of a particular behaviour; and 'efficacy expectations' which are related to one's expectations to achieve or influence a required result. Furthermore, as Henderson (2008a) contends teachers' assumptions about individual students can be crucial in a student's failure or success in literacy learning.

When teachers are in a school where they collectively believe they have the potential to impact on student achievement they are more likely to confront challenging situations and persist in raising student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). More recently, Chambers-Cantrell and Hughes (2008) study of a year-long professional development in literacy and teacher efficacy for sixth and ninth grade teachers in the United States found that teachers who had higher teacher efficacy prior to the professional development were more likely to put the recommended literacy practices in place in their teaching. They note that middle school teachers frequently expressed low levels of efficacy in literacy teaching in content areas and suggested that personal efficacy in literacy teaching should be fostered as it has the potential to impact on student literacy learning.

Effective teaching

Ruddell and Unrau (2004a) contend that effective teachers of reading consistently use clearly devised instructional strategies that have well focused goals, monitor for student feedback, have strong content knowledge of the reading process, know how to teach these processes effectively, motivate students and encourage students to engage in problem solving.

Furthermore, they suggested that influential teachers are warm and caring and have high expectations of their students and themselves as teachers.

Observations of outstanding literacy teachers in the US, with students achieving high outcomes, reported that such teachers balance skills-teaching with immersion in quality literature and authentic text experiences (Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael, & Dolesal, 2002). In a study of students from grades 1-to-5 in high poverty schools in the U.S., B. M. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2003) investigated strategies that support cognitive development in literacy learning. The most consistent finding was that higher level questioning was essential. This can be supported when teachers can use probes, following questions, to move discussion to deeper levels and encourage students to seek out and build on the author's ideas and draw on prior experiences and knowledge (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007; Soter, et al., 2008). Additionally, explicit instruction and quality time given to reading instruction every day is needed to improve reading comprehension (A. Davis, 2007b; McNaughton, et al., 2007).

Literacy professional development

Many children who can read well in the third grade do not automatically continue to develop sound comprehension skills as they move through to later grades (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Several commentators maintain that comprehension must be taught explicitly at all school levels and the expertise of the teacher is critical (see, for example, A. Davis, 2007b; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). To support this explicit teaching of comprehension, it is contended that teachers benefit from ongoing professional development in the teaching of reading comprehension and that schools need to measure student outcomes at every stage of the students' learning (see, for example, RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). This may best be supported by school-wide professional development.

Ruddell (2004) argued that in order to improve teacher competence in reading that three areas need to be considered. Firstly, influential teacher research will help enhance our understanding of the nature of effective and high-quality teaching of reading. Secondly, to increase effectiveness of pre-service teacher education there needs to be a partnership between universities and schools, and finally there needs to be carefully planned and implemented ongoing literacy professional development of teachers that utilises the latest

knowledge on effective teaching and literacy development. In a similar vein, Moats (2004b), when discussing professional development in reading, emphasised that adequate time must be allowed so that teachers can be challenged to learn and apply new teaching strategies. From her research of teachers during long-term professional development in the US, she contends that the teachers needed two years of ongoing professional development for “everything to fall into place” (p. 272). In another US study, Craig (2010) conducted a longitudinal study of a grade eight teacher and found that when the literacy experts worked in an authoritative manner staff resented the imposed change. However, in a later phase of professional development at the same school, a different literacy expert challenged teachers in a positive way and modelled effective strategies which culminated in positive changes to pedagogical thinking and practice.

In the US, The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) argues that teacher professional development in reading comprehension needs to be informed by research-based knowledge to improve teaching practices. When this occurs, they suggest, there will be positive effects on primary students’ reading achievement. However, they caution readers, that professional development in teaching reading comprehension has not been adequate and this may be linked with the need for adequate time in professional development so that teachers can be challenged to learn and apply new strategies for the teaching of reading.

Leadership in literacy learning in the wider school can play a key role in supporting reading. In New Zealand, Limbrick and Aikman (2005) have noted that more schools are appointing literacy leaders to improve achievement. Often this strategy is further enhanced by professional development that is school-wide or involves a cluster of schools. For example, in Limbrick and Knight’s (2005) New Zealand study of a cluster-wide professional development initiative in literacy, in particular writing, they found that teachers were beginning to interrogate student achievement data and work together in a professional learning community. Nevertheless, similar to commentators such as Day (2005), they identified that an environment must be established where there is trust and mutual respect.

Lai et al. (2009) in their New Zealand study of achievement in reading comprehension in contexts of cultural and linguistic diversity found that with effective professional learning communities within schools, achievement in reading comprehension could be accelerated. This longitudinal study in collaboration with the New Zealand Ministry of Education found

that using contextualised evidence of teaching and learning supported by systematic collection and analysis of data, learning communities within the school allowed teachers to discuss the evidence and make changes to practice to improve outcomes for linguistically diverse students.

Students are situated in classrooms that are within schools, and the schools reside within district and national/state environments (Valencia & Wixson, 2004). These wider institutions' policies and funding avenues filter down and influence what happens in the classroom context (N. E. Davis, 2008; Valencia & Wixson, 2004). For example, funding policies that support effective and sustained literacy professional development can impact on and improve the day-to-day reading strategies that teachers implement. This, I suggest relates back to sociocognitive theory that posited that the teachers' instructional beliefs, including their sociocultural beliefs and values, shape their instructional decision-making processes.

School leadership

According to Caldwell (2006), the role of principals in leading improvements in literacy reading achievement school-wide is pivotal. He maintains that listening to the voices of principals, who are leading schools where students' reading achievement is sound or has improved, would allow exploration of the leadership qualities and strategies that are central in facilitating sustainable and effective gains in students' literacy outcomes. Foster (2004) suggests that focusing on both the teaching and learning processes and the environment that support student learning might help us better understand successful school improvement and the role of school leadership in that process. I align with Moos, Krejsler and Kofod (2008) who contend that such a learning community is characterised by student outcomes that encompass realisation of "individual potential, student engagement, self confidence and self direction, a sense of identity, a sense of community and belonging and, of course, literacy and numeracy outcomes" (p. 344).

Because schools are embedded within wider social and cultural contexts, school principals are positioned between their teachers, parents and students, on the one hand, and the wider arena of the local community, board members and national educational policy-makers, and bureaucrats and the wider public on the other (Henze & Arriaza, 2006). The political realities of society thus affect decision-making and implementation of policy and practice within the school environment (Strike, 1999). As Stewart and Prebble (1993) point out, effective

leaders need to be actively involved in the fundamental issues of curriculum and pedagogy if schools are to improve learning outcomes for all students. Educational leaders, including head-teachers and principals therefore are not only central to school development programmes, but also the people who must reassure the students and teachers that their school environment is a safe space where they feel they belong, are respected and valued and can thus share their lived realities (Shields & Sayan, 2005). Successful leaders who understand this multifaceted setting within a school, build practices where collaborative and democratic leadership is distributed among the staff (see, for example, Day, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Theoretical perspectives (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993) provide, in this case, a basis for analysing these connections between leadership, school improvement and student learning. Constructivist theory, especially, might allow us to tease out how school leadership can positively (or otherwise) influence the interrelationships within a school that promote, say, participatory democracy and evidence-based practices, allowing teachers and students (and interested others, such as parents) to engage together as a learning community (Haas & Poynor, 2005; Lambert, et al., 1995). For that reason, learning is formed in the social world where the co-construction of knowledge occurs with equivalent contributions of the teacher and the learner (Cullen, 2002). In this manner the learner can navigate their own understanding knowledge between their world and that of the wider social and physical world (Grenfell, 2009). School leaders who recognise the complexity of settings within a school and its surrounds are better positioned to create practices where collaborative and democratic leadership is distributed among the staff, and where staff are trusted and respected relative to this process (see, for example, Day, 2005; Foster, 2004; Fullan, 2005; San Antonio, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2005). In their discussion of principals who both raise achievement and build a positive school climate, Moos, Krejsler and Kofod (2008) emphasise the need for school leaders to be inclusive and to believe (and demonstrate their belief) that all students matter and can learn.

A school environment that is problematic, particularly in respect of student–teacher relationships, contributes to decline not only in academic performance but also in student wellbeing and, from there, motivation to learn (Henderson, 2008a; Olsen & Barber, 2004). Many (for example, Fisher & Frey, 2007; Timperley, et al., 2007) stress the need for leadership that is focused on facilitating whole-school commitment to measures aimed at

raising achievement and leadership that is prepared to work collaboratively with the teaching teams and others to develop a school-wide plan based on sound guiding principles.

Parents' attitudes to and abilities in reading

There is a complex layer of multiple factors that contribute to our knowledge of raising reading achievement (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). I suggest that parents' attitudes towards reading, the home and community environments and home-school relationships may all play a part towards a child's reading achievement. There is a connection between parents' attitudes to and abilities in reading and the influence that their involvement has on the children's reading development (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006; Parkhill, et al., 2005; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). However, in New Zealand and internationally a considerable proportion of the adult population do not have adequate reading skills. Improved literacy of adults has positive impacts on the literacy acquisition of the next generation. For example, Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph, (2003) found that improved literacy of mothers had a positive long-term impact on their children's achievement. Raising adult literacy allows parents to support their children's education, thus providing adults with confidence to be involved in community activities and recreational literacy pursuits that in turn give confidence in formal education (Bowen, Dec 98/Jan 99; Wylie, 2004). Improving the literacy of low-literate parents has a positive impact on children's achievement (F. Biddulph, et al., 2003; Statistics Canada, 2003).

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) raised awareness of the deficits in adult foundation literacy skills and provided comparisons across countries (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 1997). The United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Australia identified similar crises in foundation adult literacy skills. The survey reported that adults with higher level educational qualifications were more likely to participate in further literacy-based education than those with lower level educational attainment.

In 2006, the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) survey (Satherley, Lawes, & Sok, 2008) compared data to the 1996 IALS survey. They found that there was a decrease in the percentage of the New Zealand adult population with very low literacy skills over that period of time. However, of concern was underachievement of significant percentages of the population. For example, in prose literacy 13 per cent and document literacy 14 percent of

the New Zealand population were achieving at a very low level. These findings were similar to patterns that occurred in the United States, Australia and Canada (Satherley, et al., 2008).

Internationally there has been a call to raise achievement in literacy for adult learners for a number of years. Improving literacy achievement for learners of all ages has been designated by the United Nations as a key area, with 2003 to 2012 named the Literacy Decade (UNESCO Education, 2003). On similar lines, Britain promised £B1.5 to raise adult literacy and numeracy levels with a £M2 advertising campaign aimed to raise the literacy skills of 750,000 adults by 2004 (Whittaker, 2001). While the initial target of improving 'adult' levels seemed to have been reached by 2004, 50 percent of those achieving the targets were 16 to 19 years of age (Appleby & Bathmaker, 2006). More recently, the United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills director of research and policy reported that the UK had set a target for 50 per cent of their adult population achieving one higher level of qualification than they have now. He estimated that this skill development has added between £B30 - £B50 to the UK's gross domestic product (GDP) (Gerritsen, 2008).

Home-school partnerships

Learning to read is a complex process that starts long before school. Family literacy programmes have all been targeted at increasing the frequency of parents' interactions with print in the home (J. Biddulph, 2004; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2003c; Padak & Rasinski, 2006). McNaughton (2002) in describing the early development of literacy as a co-construction, contends that literacy activities reflect and construct social and cultural meanings and cannot be separated from the life experiences of a family. When a student's family and community value reading and provide a model for them to emulate by demonstrating the social nature of reading and developing talk around texts, a student is likely to develop a love for reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004). I maintain that this reading mileage can enhance reading achievement and long term attitudes that likely result in valuing reading. In addition, parents and teachers can complement each other as they work towards the same goal of enhancing the child's reading achievement.

Effective home-school partnerships support students' learning and are enhanced by families who have high expectations for their children (Alton-Lee, 2003; F. Biddulph, et al., 2003; Wylie, 2004; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). The teacher's role in facilitating parental involvement in children's reading development is crucial (Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). Well informed

parents are key partners in any programme but especially so when an intervention programme is being planned. For example, Padak & Rasinski's (2006) study of a home reading involvement programme for primary grade students showed increases in reading achievement. During daily 10 -15 minute sessions the parents read a short passage both to and with their child, listened to the child read the text, and discussed and engaged in a related word study activity. The programmes were implemented both at the early and middle years of schooling and the students achieved in reading well above what would normally be expected.

Partnerships between home and school are more likely to be effective when they are based on shared expectations between teachers and parents that the student will succeed as a learner (F. Biddulph, et al., 2003). Absolum (2006) suggests that building a partnership with parents is about building a sound trusting relationship amongst the teacher, the student and the student's family. Furthermore, I suggest with the growing cultural diversity of students within our New Zealand classrooms and therefore parents from many diverse ethnic groups, there is a challenge for teachers to uncover appropriate ways to help all parents understand how they can support their children's reading (Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, et al., 2009).

In summary, evidence from a wide range of national and international literature (see, for example, Alspaugh, 1998; F. Biddulph, et al., 2003; Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, et al., 2009; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Lockwood, 2008; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007) converges to suggest that adult literacy, parents' attitudes to and ability in reading, students' engagement in reading and home school partnerships are deeply entangled and influence reading achievement in multiple ways. A picture is emerging that effective teachers and schools, with knowledge of effective reading instruction, can work in partnership with parents to improve reading achievement. However, there appears to be a lack of parents' perspectives in this research area.

How my study builds on this review of the literature

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory has influenced thinking in regards to learning. His work provided a wider perspective of factors that influence learning. The writings of socio cultural/constructivist theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) and Rogoff (1990) enabled literacy researchers and those in the wider educational research area to accept new qualitative

research approaches that gave a holistic view of what was occurring in schools and classrooms. The sociocognitive perspective acknowledges how the family and community influence the sociocultural values and beliefs of the reader and how this has a pervasive effect on the student in the school environment (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a). Additionally, it identifies the critical role that cognitive conditions play in the reading process. These cognitive conditions include, for example, knowledge of language and concepts; strategies for identifying a new word; understanding how text is organised; and understanding the social context where reading occurs.

I situate my study within a conceptual framework that views reading instruction and acquisition as practices that are shaped by social contexts and by the ways literacy approaches are adapted and transformed. Social theory provides conditional understandings that can change and adapt, is based on evidence and yet seeks to be neutral considering all sides. It would seem researchers when developing theories rarely claim to have all the answers. This allows theories to grow and develop. Shulman (1988) contends that theory, research methods and questions should show connections. In line with sociocultural/constructivist and sociocognitive theories, I sought to build understandings of the experiences, perceptions and inter-relationships of 11- to 13-year-old students, their parents, teachers, literacy leaders and principals situated in schools where there are sustained and regular reading programmes with reportedly effective teachers of reading. Also, I wanted to find out how the guided reading instruction was carried out by the teachers so I could better understand the types of strategies the teachers used and how the students responded. In this study I sought to position students' reading within the wider systemic arena and explore the connections and interactions amongst key people, such as principals, literacy leaders, teachers and parents.

Summary

In this chapter sociocultural/constructivist and sociocognitive theories have been discussed. There has been an examination of other research theorists that fit with these theories, particularly in regards to reading. In particular, the chapter contains illustrations of relevant research theories related to reading skills, dialogic discourse, comprehension, scaffolding, attitudes towards reading, teacher efficacy, effective teaching, professional development and school leadership, parents' attitudes to reading and home school partnerships. The chapter concludes with reasons given for the selection of sociocultural/constructivist and

sociocognitive theories as the major conceptual frameworks to inform this current study. This thesis is guided by these theories on issues such as developing comprehension strategies particularly for young adolescent students, teacher's beliefs on effective teaching and how that influences their practices and the wider structures within the school that promote and improve literacy practices.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological process and associated procedures used to explore what is happening in reading in Year 7 and 8 classrooms and the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders such as literacy leaders, parents, teachers, principals and students.

Chapter Four

The Research Process

As explained in the introductory chapter my research uses multiple case studies to address the question, ‘What are the wider systemic conditions that support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students?’ My approach to this investigation is mainly a qualitative one. Interviews of parents, literacy leaders and principals, and observations and interviews of teachers and students were used to understand the complex activity of supporting 11- to 13-year-old students’ reading. The observations of the instructional reading lessons included both the development of structured and unstructured data collection techniques. The systematic and structured data collection were selected to capture, through a different lens, the number and type of specific strategies the teachers implemented during a guided reading lesson and gain deeper perceptions of the number and type of student interactions to enable a more holistic view to be drawn out.

I selected an approach that involved case studies where there were unambiguous and non-trivial collections of conditions of the expected outcomes of effective teaching of reading for Year 7 and 8 students. Purposeful sampling of multiple case studies allowed me to discover, gain insight and find out what occurs in the schools, and understand, as Merriam (1988) advocates, the relationships that influence the occurrence and the implications that might manipulate or effect the occurrence. Heeding the suggestion of Tashakkori and Teddie (1998), the qualitative data and my analysing of it allowed me to explore the research participants’ views which gave me more detail within which to filter the components of quantitative structured classroom observation results. Interviewing a range of stakeholders concurred with Williams and Baumann (2008) who conclude in their analysis of contemporary studies on effective teachers of literacy, future research needed to corroborate findings using a range of data sources. They recommend using administrator, student and parent interviews to gain deeper meaning.

A central principle guiding the research

In this thesis, the analysis and reporting of the data from a number of case study schools were not planned to be used as a comparison amongst the schools but rather as a composite

understanding of a larger phenomenon occurring across a range of school types (Wieviorka, 1992). The findings aimed to be particularistic, rather than claiming greater generality.

Overview of chapter

This chapter outlines the research process under eight sections. In the first section, I include a justification for the socio-constructivist research paradigm and the selection of the predominantly qualitative research approach. Following this, in section two, I discuss and justify the research design. This includes an outline of critical case study. I discuss and defend interviews and observations as appropriate data collection procedures for this study. I discuss the overarching research project's advisory committee, the types of interviews, the interview schedules and the special procedural consideration of using focus group interviews when interviewing children.

In section three, the selection of case study schools is discussed. Ethical considerations are outlined in section four. Included in the fifth section on data collection, I discuss the pilot study, the development of the structured observational survey, the selected critical case study schools and relevant procedural information. In section six, I discuss my processes of data analysis.

In section seven, I acknowledge the nature and role of previous publications and dissemination of this research. Finally, in section eight, I discuss the trustworthiness of the research process.

The research methodology

A socio-constructivist research paradigm

In this research I drew on the basic beliefs associated with the socio-constructivist paradigm. My assumption was that knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore as a researcher I sought to understand the lived experiences of those who exist in the real world (Schwandt, 2000), in this instance those differing groups of players who work together to support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students in New Zealand schools. Within this socio-constructivist paradigm, I wanted to understand the different components within the wider systemic system which dynamically interrelate and interact in multiple and dynamic manner to support reading for young adolescent students. Here, I might find that these multiple

realities of what the different research participants perceived had or should occur, may well interact or conflict positively with each other, and also that they may change and adapt according to the differing circumstances in time and place. I sought to use interviews to illuminate the perceptions of a variety of groups of people who support young adolescent students in reading. Furthermore, to better understand the classroom reality I decided to implement observations of the teachers as they took a guided reading lesson with their 11- to 13-year-old students. Using interviews and observations aligned with my socio-constructivist paradigm, where I sought to develop a construction of meaning through analysing the data from case study schools.

Qualitative methodology

My investigation focused on exploring the participants in their natural setting, teasing out meaning in an inductive manner and seeking cultural patterns (Hammersley, 1992). By employing in-depth interviewing and observations I sought to provide truthful accounts of the social world and what was occurring. The method provided me the opportunity for the in-depth study of smaller samples, so I could explore process and change with a greater methodological flexibility.

I endeavoured to undertake predominantly qualitative research that would be conducted in the usual context where the phenomenon is occurring. By predominantly using data that were descriptive which takes account of words rather than numerical results, I sought to analyse the data inductively with theory emerging from the bottom up rather than supporting a hypothesis. In doing so, I contended that making meaning from the different groups of participants' perceptions and experiences would be paramount. Indeed, I planned to investigate how young adolescent students are supported in reading development and how these young adolescents and their parents appreciate, perceive and comprehend the array of structures and supports that the school and the wider educational system has in place to promote reading development. As the researcher, I wanted to gain the insiders' perspectives and the meanings that they attach to events. These thick descriptions would provide me with a rich and detailed account of the social phenomena.

Data gathering methods

I sought to add a certain aspect of structured observational data to my predominantly qualitative research investigation in a manner, as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) describe,

that could complement the strengths of qualitative research. In doing so this would provide me with a more complete and fuller portrait of what was occurring in the social world of young adolescent students as they continued through their final years of primary schooling. In line with Greene, Kreider and Mayer (2005), I sought to use multiple lenses of gathering data. Namely, there were the interviews of the differing groups of research participants and the structured observations of the guided reading lessons to provide a snapshot of quantitative information. I contended that in so doing, this might allow there to be more credibility and less known bias as I analysed the data and unpacked the findings. Here, with the inclusion of a structured observation schedule, in this predominantly qualitative research project, I contended that new understandings might be facilitated which would allow for a greater consciousness and diversity of values and positions to advance knowledge in supporting reading for young adolescent students. In essence, the research paradigm I drew on was socio-constructivist. The research was predominantly qualitative with a limited inclusion of a quantitative component.

The research design

Case study

In selecting case studies, I was able to observe effects occurring in real situations and recognise that the context had a strong influence on both the cause and effects. The dynamic nature of the contexts at the five case study schools allowed me to investigate the unfolding events, interactions, relationships and other factors to provide rich, vivid and thick descriptions of what the different stakeholders perceived and experienced in promoting and supporting reading for these 11- to 13-year-old students. I was interested in the general phenomenon occurring across locations and time. In doing so, I sought to gain an understanding of a phenomenon occurring across a range of school types. A collective case study or multiple qualitative research approach was utilised. Additionally, to be more representative of the different types of schools in New Zealand and the variety of stakeholders who might impact on reading development a larger sample of participants and cases was investigated.

Multiple case studies interested me as I wanted to better understand why some schools reportedly had effective reading programmes in the upper primary school, when the literature and anecdotal reports indicated that this was not consistently occurring across all schools.

Strauss and Corbin (1990a) describe how case studies at several sites can be oriented to developing theory. I sought to collect data from open-ended interviews but also include participant observations. This procedure would include me collecting and analysing data from the multiple case studies on effective teaching of reading to develop a conceptual model for supporting reading which I discuss in Chapter Twelve.

In order to develop a descriptive model that included all cases of the phenomena, my data were collected and analysed, and from that a developing theory was built up and refined. I utilised existing theories as discussed in Chapters One, Two and Three to develop my model of supporting reading for 11- to 13-year-old students. Thus, I sought to position my research project to develop a platform for building on theory about supporting reading for young adolescent students. In this regard, Chapter Twelve outlines my wider systemic model for supporting reading.

Critical case study

To explore the research questions of this investigation, I selected critical case study to delve into a range of school types to ascertain the specific factors associated with these schools' implementation of sustained, regular reading programmes for their 11- to 13-year-old students. Flyvberg (2007) contends that critical case study is where the cases under investigation have strategic importance relative to the overall problem. I wanted to use critical case study that was based on my theoretical understandings where there is an unambiguous, comprehensible and non-trivial collection of conditions where expected outcomes would be found. Cognisant of the advocacy of Flyvberg, in my critical case study, schools were purposively selected that had been identified by literacy experts as having regular, sustained and reportedly effective instructional reading programmes in the upper primary school.

This would provide the evidence to formulate particular characteristics of these critical cases and develop a collective understanding of a phenomenon occurring across a range of school types (Stake, 2005). Furthermore, this would give a powerful improvement to understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon. As progressing the praxis and practice of teachers requires the creation of social and institutional conditions to support improvement, I sought a better understanding of these wider systemic conditions (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). My argument is that the responsibility of supporting reading for young adolescent students

cannot rest solely within the school context, with the burden and in some cases blame of non-achievement in reading being placed on teachers and their principal. I contend that the social institutions that are in place to support and lead education, along with the family and wider socio cultural community, must also have responsibility in the reading outcomes for our young adolescents. Therefore my research methodology was positioned to explore the views, experiences and beliefs of both those working within the school context and also their clients, the parents and students.

Advisory committee

A research advisory committee was set up consisting of literacy experts and educational leaders. It included two professors of literacy, school literacy advisors, a leading intermediate school principal, a regional Ministry of Education literacy development officer (responsible for leading and facilitating literacy development within a designated geographic area of New Zealand), Māori and Pacific Island leaders in education and the president of the regional reading association. The role of the committee was to give advice on the research project and help identify schools where the committee member perceived there to be effective reading programmes occurring. Further discussion of the advice the advisory committee gave pertaining to the selection of the schools is discussed later in this chapter.

Instruments to collect data

The instruments to collect data included individual interviews, focus group interviews, and systematic and structured observations along with ‘in situ’ running record observations of the guided reading lessons. The individual interviews were with the teachers, literacy leaders, principals and parents, whilst the focus group interviews were with the students and conducted in groups of three.

My more detailed discussion of the instruments used to collect the data begins with the role of the interviewer and the methods of recording the interview data. I then discuss structured and unstructured interviews and my rationale for deciding on semi-structured interviews. Next, I look at issues surrounding interviewing children and this leads onto consideration related to my choice of using focus group interviews with the students. Finally, I discuss the interview schedules and the lesson observations.

The interviewer

The role of the interviewer and how she/he is perceived by the interviewees was an important aspect of this case study research. I wanted the interviewees to view me as an outsider looking-in to gain the insider's view. In this way I would be distanced from the phenomenon under scrutiny (Powney & Watts, 1987). Establishing at the start of the interview process that I was outside their particular school context would encourage the interviewees to view me as someone who did not have a vested interest in their school community or/and who was not checking on what was happening for the management within their school community (Powney & Watts, 1987). However, I recognised that overcoming these possible fears and seeking the reality may well be influenced by the interviewee's perceived vulnerability and status within an organisation, such as a school. If I became aware of any vulnerability, I realised it would be taken into account when analysing and drawing inferences from data. I strove to be viewed as a listener to the concerns and issues that arise in the lives of the research participants, rather than be viewed as a person of social status and knowledge who might manipulate the information and the interview (Barbour & Schostak, 2005). Then again, whether I was able to achieve this as I interviewed a wide range of research participants was problematic. Arguably, similar to many research investigations, the interviewer can at best strive to be empathetic and reassure participants that the data will be used to improve outcomes for learners.

The interview questions were shared with the interviewees prior to the interview to help negotiate the interviewee's acceptance and begin to provide an understanding of the philosophical and ethical role of the researcher (Powney & Watts, 1987). I aimed to develop trust between the interviewer and interviewee, to minimize the vulnerabilities of the interviewee by spending time when I met each interviewee talking in a friendly and informal manner about local community matters. Additionally, I talked with the principal at each school prior to undertaking the interviews. I hoped that the research participants would not feel the desire to conceal murky dimensions or to make a good impression, rather than expose the reality (Barbour & Schostak, 2005).

Methods of recording the interview data

Methods of recording interviews have advantages and disadvantages. Interviews that are audio-taped capture the exact dialogue but can be intrusive and are time consuming and/or

expensive to transcribe. Full note-taking while less formal, can intrude on the interviewer's concentration, be off-putting for the interviewee and only capture a small percentage of the dialogue (Powney & Watts, 1987). In this study, I decided, in discussion with the wider research project team, that the pilot study provided an opportunity to trial the interview questions for each of the subgroups to be interviewed, and I, therefore, used both audio-taping and full note-taking to decide how best to capture the insiders' views.

Deciding on the type of interview

I was cognisant that all interviews are structured in some manner, not only in the questions asked, but also where the locus of control lies (Powney & Watts, 1987). Therefore, I wanted to try and minimise the researcher as the person holding the power. A structured interview was eliminated for two reasons relating to control and flexibility. Firstly, it follows a clear and well organised pattern where the interviewer's issues matter, rather than the respondents' (Powney & Watts, 1987). Secondly, the order and delivery of the questions is the same for all respondents so that flexibility and variation are minimised.

I liked the way that unstructured interviews allowed for more flexibility and open-ended in-depth discourse. Using unstructured interviews would mean that the area of inquiry would not be limited and better understandings of events and interviewee's interpretations of situations might occur. However, when I considered the use of unstructured interviews, I was hesitant as I wanted to ensure that certain areas of interest pertinent to the research question would be covered. Thus, a semi-structured interview schedule was selected so as to provide a backbone of questions for each group of participants. The semi-structured interview questions would provide a guide to ensure that my overall planned areas for discussion would be covered systematically. Nevertheless, I wanted to ensure that the interviews were a social interaction and for each individual participant there may be different issues that arose which would need further questions or prompts to elucidate the information. Additionally, I agreed with Fontana and Frey (1994) who caution interviewers that they need to be aware of difference in respondents and "be able to make the proper adjustments called for by unanticipated developments" (p. 703). By using the semi-structured interview it still allowed for the unexpected and dialogue of the participants so they were not limited by only a set of pre-determined questions. Furthermore, I was resolute that in the interviews flexibility and freedom were also encouraged by the interviewer so that the participants might share related issues significant to their personal contexts.

Interviewing children

As this research investigation was from a socio-constructivist paradigm, where multiple realities are investigated, interviewing the students was non-negotiable. I was aware that some researchers tend to disfavour interviewing children for several reasons, including the perception that children are not competent interview subjects, issues around power, and threats to validity and reliability (Dockrell, Lewis, & Lindsay, 2000; A. B. Smith, Taylor, & Gollop, 2000). It is therefore often the adult's view of the world that shapes our understanding of children with this view influencing how data are collected and interpreted. My concern was by not allowing students to be active participants in the research process that their voices are silenced and they become passive recipients of how their learning is created and developed. I wanted to allow the students to voice their perceptions as this can guide educators towards providing better conditions. These conditions include acknowledging greater respect for children's rights, their views of the learning environments and providing a more transparent protection process for children in their schooling environment (Gollop, 2000; A. B. Smith, et al., 2000). I report these findings in Chapter Eight.

Special procedural considerations adopted: Focus group interviews

Prior research with my colleagues (see, for example, Fletcher & Parkhill, 2007; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006) had found that focus group interviews when talking with children offered an effective method for gathering rich, in-depth accounts of experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The participants have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on ideas raised by group members (Dockrell, et al., 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2005). I found that when researchers respect the participants' ideas and opinions this can encourage them to share their observations and bring to mind pertinent information. Also, I found that the focus group interview encouraged more reluctant participants, ensuring that all participants had opportunity to respond (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

However, I was aware of limitations of using focus group interviewing. If it is a pre-existing group, researchers cannot control the extraneous variables of group composition, the evolving interactions, the diversity of opinion and interplay of power and 'hidden pecking orders' within the group (Barbour & Schostak, 2005; Vaughn, Schumm, & Singagub, 1996; Waldegrave, 1999). Another caution was that focus group interviews can veer towards

agreement and a conformity of views rather than eliciting interviewee's real views (Barbour & Schostak, 2005).

After discussion with the wider research team it was decided that firstly, focus group interviewing would be trialled in the pilot study of this research with the students and secondly, with the teachers and parents. This decision to trial it with the teachers and parents was influenced by logistics, as the principal of the pilot study school had indicated the full schedules of both teachers and parents meant they had limited availability. The advantages and limitations of focus group interviews were to be explored once the pilot study was completed.

Interview schedules

A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed for each subgroup of research participants. As this was part of the wider research project, the members of the research team together examined the questions to consider for each subgroup (principals, teachers, literacy leaders, students and parents). The critical question underlying the analyses of the interview schedules was, 'What are we trying to find out?' Next, the order and progressive development of the questions was considered. A final consideration was to trim down the number of questions to a size that would make the research manageable and eliminate questions that may not be so pertinent. The interviews were semi-structured, so the number of questions was limited to allow for the interviewers to follow up on issues and for the interviewee to add additional information that they perceived as relevant.

The principals were asked questions that related to supporting reading from a wider school perspective and from a leadership role. They were questions such as: How important do you consider instructional reading to be at this level of schooling? Why? What school-wide assessment practices are implemented and how is the data used to inform teaching? What support/professional development is (or has been) available for teachers to enhance their practice?

The questions for the literacy leaders were intended to explore their role and also the issues across the whole school literacy programmes. They included questions such as: How much collaboration occurs between teachers on the quality of their programmes and in the interpretation of assessment information? What are the biggest challenges facing your

classroom teachers in the implementing of quality programmes? How do you help teachers who require assistance to deliver quality programmes? The questions for the teachers centred on classroom practices and issues that the teachers might encounter. They included: What are the barriers to the teaching of reading at this age level and in this type of school? How do your assessment results influence your teaching decisions? How do you cater for the low progress reader in your classroom? What resources engage children in both instructional and independent reading?

The interview questions for the parents were to explore issues that they had encountered or experienced. They included: How do you encourage your child to read at home? How do you know how well your child is doing in reading? What concerns you most about your child's reading and what assistance (if any) have you sought? The focus group interviews with the students had a set of questions to try and explore the range of barriers and or supports that these young adolescents might encounter. They included questions such as: How does the teacher assist you to become better at reading and writing? Where do you get most of your reading material from? How much encouragement do you get from your parents to improve your reading? (Please see the appendices for the individual interview schedules for each subgroup of interviewees.)

Observations

Observations allow the researcher to record a person's impression of what has occurred. Similar to interviews they can be structured or unstructured. Jones and Somekh (2005) outline how observations are ontologically determined in that they depend on how the observer conceptualizes the world and their place within that world. I was aware that the type of observations and how they are conducted and analysed would be influenced and shaped by my beliefs and assumptions. As the study was derived from a socio-constructivist perspective, an unstructured and open-ended approach to observing the guided reading lesson was trialed at the pilot study. Observations included informal time sampling of the types of interactions between the teacher and the students. Along with this, my co-researcher (as outlined in Chapter One in the section on the wider research project) took an 'in situ' written, running record of what was happening in the lesson, noting the type of role that the teacher took and the engagement and interest of the students. This aligned with Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Toloa, Turner and Hsiao (2009) study discussed in Chapter Two, which included 'in situ' running record observations of reading instruction in New Zealand

schools. It also involved recording in written form the wider classroom environment and any charts or other teaching aids used to support the wider reading programme.

Prior to collecting the data

Selection of schools

It was decided that the schools should be from a discrete area within the wider South Island of New Zealand, as this was an area that was under researched in literacy learning. One of the six norms of scientific research is that the sample selection should be appropriate for the research study and that it should be representative of that population and sufficient in number so that they can benefit from the study. With this in mind, I contended that it was important that the case study schools should represent a range of types in regards to decile rating; geographic location (city, town, rural); cultural diversity; and include full primary and intermediate; and state and integrated schools.

The problem of what was perceived as ‘effective’ was debated and issues as discussed in Chapter Two were considered. As a solution it was decided that those committee members who had sound knowledge of upper school literacy programmes would nominate schools with Year 7 and 8 teachers that they considered to have regular and effective reading programmes. This aligned with earlier studies in the US and the UK on effective teachers of reading which also had used ‘expert’ groups to nominate effective teachers (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 2006; Wray, et al., 2000). A higher percentage of high decile school names were provided than of those schools in the decile 1 to 5 range, with only one school nominated in the lower band of decile 1 to 3.

To support the nominations of the schools considered to be effective in the teaching of reading a set of guiding principles was developed with socio-constructivist and sociocognitive theories in mind. These were developed to guide the committee in their selection of schools where they perceived there to be effective teaching of reading in Years 7 and 8, and also for the purpose of the principal in the school using these to guide his or her nomination of effective Year 7 to 8 reading teachers. By providing these criteria and using the nominated schools, the multi-site critical case studies were more likely to provide a collective understanding of the wider systemic issues around the phenomenon of schools that

implement sustained and reportedly effective reading programmes for Years 7 and 8 students (Stake, 2005).

Although, the following guiding principles were based on understandings of what effective teachers of reading implement in a wide range of age levels in primary classrooms, the research was focused on uncovering the possibility that there were other key factors, particularly those associated with students in their final two years of primary schooling. For example, four of the guiding principles were: the schools have Years 7 and 8 teachers who encourage students, in order to enhance literacy learning using rich discussion with and amongst the students; they allow students to question and challenge their teacher and one another about the texts they are reading and justify their responses to those texts; the teachers monitor, assess, and reflect on students' learning and analyse and use assessment data to plan for future teaching; they demonstrate high but realistic expectations of students and believe that teachers can improve achievement in reading.

The possible schools nominated by the advisory members were filtered to ensure that a range of school types was represented including differing: socio-economic areas; geographic locations (city, town, rural); cultural diversity; full primary and intermediate schools; and state and integrated (church schools integrated with the state system and often Roman Catholic in denomination) schools. The possible schools were then approached and asked if they would be interested in taking part in this research project. One principal from a rural school declined indicating that the staff was under pressure with an upcoming Education Review Office visit. Finally, five case study schools agreed to take part in the study. Also, the principal of a sixth school agreed to allow a pilot study at her school. As mentioned earlier, only one low decile school had been nominated so this slightly skewed the sample of case studies with four of the five case study schools from deciles five to nine.

Ethical considerations

The ethics for this research project were guided from a constructivist paradigm. One of the four basic belief systems that assist in defining a paradigm as identified by Guba and Lincoln (2005) is ascertaining what is the nature of the ethics. Constructivist researchers (and almost all researchers) have been guided by the landmark report, *The Belmont Report (The National Commission for the Protection Of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979)*. This includes three ethical principles.

Respect for persons: Individuals should be treated courteously and respectfully as autonomous agents, and persons with diminished autonomy. For example children, are entitled to protection.

Beneficence: Researchers have an obligation to expressions of beneficent actions in that they seek to minimise any potential harm and maximise good outcomes.

Justice: Ensuring that the research procedures are non- exploitative and that there is a fairness in distribution in who receives the benefits of research.

Thus in my investigation, I wanted to ensure that my research would be of benefit to the long-term educational outcomes of all young adolescent students and that the interrelated groups that are charged in society with supporting their learning, work together in a supportive and pro-active manner. This involved treating all the research participants with respect and valuing their perceptions and listening and reporting their experiences in a manner that would inform educators and other interested readers.

Informed consent

I contend that research participants must agree to voluntarily participate in the research without threat or inducement. They need to explicitly agree to be part of the study and have the right to withdraw from the research at any time during the research project without prejudice. In this research, ethical approval was gained from the University of Canterbury's Ethics Committee. All the subgroups of research participants were provided with specific information sheets that explained the reason for the research, the role that they as possible participants would be expected to undertake, that they could withdraw from the research at any time and that they could make a complaint to the University of Canterbury's Ethics Committee, should they wish to do so. Accompanying the information sheet was a consent form. The information and consent forms for the 11- to 13-year-old students were sent to the students' parents for their approval too.

Anonymity and confidentiality

The privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants were respected. Pseudonyms were used in the reporting of the data. Access to the data was restricted to the researchers, the research supervisors and the professional research assistant who transcribed

and undertook an initial analysis of the data. The data were stored in locked offices as outlined by the University of Canterbury's Ethics Committee.

Minimisation of risk

As the teachers, literacy leaders and principals were asked to discuss their practices and praxis it was made clear that the findings from the research would be constructed in a manner to inform educators and researchers of practices that can better support students' reading. When interviewing the parents and students, they were made aware that their comments and thoughts were confidential and were to inform the research project overall.

I was cognisant that research involving children needs to consider and contribute to their wellbeing either directly or indirectly. Arrangements were made to minimise risk and stress by ensuring their parents, teachers and parents were fully aware of the intention of the research and that they could withdraw from the research. The children were spoken to during the research process in a way that would allow them to feel good about contributing to research (Hill, 2005). As my earlier research in interviewing children (see, for example, Fletcher & Parkhill, 2007; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006) had found that the children were relatively at ease when being interviewed in focus group interviews, one of the founding principles of this research was that the students were more likely to feel at ease in an interview with their peers. Interviewing, not only sought the students' perspectives, but acknowledged their rights as competent citizens.

Data collection

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted at an intermediate school to trial the interviews and observation procedures. An individual interview was conducted with the principal, while the literacy leader and two Year 7 and 8 teachers nominated by the principal as effective teachers of literacy were interviewed as a focus group. Four male and four female Year 7 students were focus group interviewed and three parents, all mothers, of year 7 and 8 children were focus group interviewed. The two teachers were observed teaching guided reading with the researchers recording anecdotal notes. The interviews took approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were audio-taped and written notes were taken.

After the pilot study school visit it was decided to interview the teachers, literacy leaders, and parents individually rather than as a focus group so each research participant would not be under any constraints of peers judging their responses. However, with the students, it was decided to interview them in groups of three so the less vocal might feel more at ease to respond to the researchers. Also, the larger group of students trialled in the pilot study had proved problematic when transcribing the interviews and identifying each individual student.

During the pilot observations of the guided reading lesson, the detail of the interactions had been difficult to capture and issues such as the types of strategies the teachers instigated and the type and frequency of student participation had appeared variable. A structured and quantitative approach to observation would provide precise and detailed data that would offer a different lens to view the guided reading lesson. This would allow for the development of a more complete understanding of the students' world in the classroom context and use multiple perspectives in gathering data.

Structured observational schedule

As a limited part of my dissertation, I wanted to explore in a preliminary manner not only what the teachers did, but also to gain a better understanding of the types and number of interactions from the individual students in a guided reading lesson. Other studies observing effective teachers of reading had focused on the teacher, but did not explicitly report on the interactions and types of discourse the students responded to or initiated (see, for example, B. M. Taylor, et al., 2005; B. M. Taylor, et al., 2003; Wray, et al., 2000). From a socio-constructivist perspective, the dialogic framework needs to not only be considered from what a teacher does but just as importantly considered from the types and frequency of discourse that students engage in.

Cazden (2001), when discussing classroom discourse, claimed that two thirds of the time teachers talk and the frequent pattern of the classroom discourse is initiation by the teacher, response/s from the students and an evaluation by the teacher (Initiation, Response, Evaluation: I-R-F). She contends that "one pervasive feature of the content of teacher talk is the expression of control – the control of the behavior and of talk itself" (p. 160). More recently, H. Smith and Higgins (2006) UK study investigated classroom interaction during literacy and numeracy teaching and found that students had minimal opportunities to engage in extended dialogue either amongst themselves or with their teacher. These authors

identified the pattern of initiation-response-feedback. This “structure of classroom interaction (had been) first identified by Sinclair and Coulthard in 1975” (H. Smith & Higgins, 2006, p. 489). I wanted to undertake a snapshot exploration surrounding H. Smith and Higgins’ assumptions of teacher control and if these assumptions were a reality in guided reading lessons where teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading. In line with Rowan and Correnti (2009), I defend my use of a single observation of classroom practice of each teacher, as in-person observations are expensive and are limited to only a small number of well funded, large scale studies.

I was guided by B. M. Taylor and colleagues’ (2000) investigation of 11 moderate to high poverty schools that had implemented reading reform and had shown better than expected reading achievement. In their observations of the teachers they include six teacher interaction styles based on an extensive review of the literature on effective teachers of reading. These were: coaching where the teacher prompts the learner; modeling/ demonstrating where the teacher demonstrates how to do something by thinking aloud or performing the task; engaging students in recitation where the teacher engages the students in questioning where a short and specific response is sought; telling students information where the teacher provides facts in an abstract form without specific directions on what to do; explaining how to do something where the teacher gives a direct explanation of the process; and engaging students in discussion where the teacher promotes and leads discussion a way in which the conventions of discussion apply.

Additionally, some strategies were common to both B. M. Taylor and colleagues’ observations and the deliberate acts of teaching identified by the New Zealand Ministry of Education texts (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2003b, 2006). The specific strategies selected for the observational survey included: *modeling* – articulating how a proficient reader operates on text and making the learning visible; *prompting* – assisting students to use their current knowledge to further unlock the deeper meanings or word level knowledge; *questioning* – the most commonly used tool by teachers to develop strategies for making meaning and thinking critically; *telling* – supplying information to fill gaps or keep the momentum of the lesson; *explaining* – clarifying a concept or a strategy, a learning activity or the content of the text.

I wanted to better understand the dialogic discourse and how opportunities were or were not provided to allow multiple voices to discuss and debate the text to foster divergent ideas (Conley, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010). The observational schedule was constructed to identify the frequency and types of responses from the individual students in the guided reading group. Five criteria were included. They were: the student *answering* an ‘open’ question that required higher-order thinking such as: inferring, predicting, synthesising, comparing or summarising; the student *answering* a ‘closed’ question that required a factual answer; the student *asking* an ‘open’ question that required higher-order thinking; the student *asking* a ‘closed’ question; the student *making a* statement. (Refer to Appendix C for a key to observations.)

Open questions were those such as, ‘If you were Anna and your brother had been bullied how would you have felt and what might you have done? In what ways could the author have changed the ending of the story?’ Closed questions included questions such as, ‘At what time did the shop close?’ ‘Who was the victim?’

The unstructured observation

To better encapsulate any differing and wider strategies implemented, I decided to have my co-researcher simultaneously observing the lessons using a more participatory and anecdotal observation style. This ‘in-situ’ observation aligned with the work of Lai, et al. (2009), in their New Zealand study on reading achievement. It involved using an experienced literacy educator recording in written form the key components within the reading lesson, whilst at the same time I was using the structured observational schedule. Within the social constructivist perspective, the observation would aim to collect data in an open-ended manner taking all aspects into account and explore the complexity and detail (Geertz, 1973).

The selected critical case study schools

The case study schools represented a range of socio-economic areas and school types. As discussed earlier, the advisory committee had only been able to identify one school in the lower deciles. This has slanted the decile range to include a slightly higher weighting in the upper socio-economic range. The five schools were one decile 2, one decile 5, one decile 8 and two decile nine schools. The ethnic composition within the schools differed with European, the predominant ethnicity in New Zealand, ranging from 54 per cent to 96 per cent. The other two main ethnic groups were Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand,

ranging from 2 per cent to 27 per cent, and 0 per cent to 12 per cent Pasifika. Table 2 provides an overview of the profile of the schools.

Table 2
Profile of schools

School	School type	Age range	Decile rating	Ethnic mix	Catchment area	No of pupils	No of teachers interviewed and observed teaching (each on one occasion)	Nos of pupils interviewed (each on one occasion)	Nos of parents interviewed (each on one occasion)
A	State full primary (Y 1-8)	5-13	5	Mostly European with 12 % Māori	Small town	407	2	6	2
B	State full primary (Y 1-8)	5-13	9	Mostly European	Rural	196	1	4	2
C	State intermediate (Y7-8)	10-13	8	Mostly European with 10 % Māori	City	604	2	6	2
D	Integrated (Usually Roman Catholic) full primary (Y1-8)	5-13	9	Mostly European	City	219	2	6	2
E	State intermediate (Y7-8)	10-13	2	Multicultural, with 54% European	City	191	1	3	2

School A, a decile 5 full primary school, comprises students from a wide range of SES backgrounds – from low income or unemployed families to those within the small town community who own small businesses or are from a professional background. School B, a decile 9 full primary school, caters for children who, in general, live on small rural properties; many of their parents commute to work in the nearby city. Schools C and D, Deciles 8 and 9 respectively, are situated in middle to upper SES areas of a small city. School C is a state intermediate school, and School D an integrated Catholic full primary school.

School E, a Decile 2 school, is situated in a low SES area of a large city. A good number of the parents of the children attending this school are unemployed. If they are employed, they are likely to receive a low hourly wage rate and to maintain two or three jobs. The school's community also has a wider range of ethnic groups than the other four schools in the study, and the stock of rental property tends to be at the lower cost end of the rental market.

Selection of the teachers

The principals of the schools were given the list of guiding principles (discussed earlier in this chapter) that the research advisory selection committee had devised with the research team and had used to nominate schools they contended to be effective. Using these same guiding principles, the school principals were asked to nominate who they suggested were effective teachers of reading in years 7 to 8. In total, eight teachers were individually interviewed and observed teaching reading.

In summary, the identification of the effective teachers of reading had four types of measure. Firstly, evidence is drawn from case studies of five schools representative of a range of New Zealand schools that according to the research advisory committee, whilst taking into consideration the set of guiding principles, had effective teachers of reading for 11- to 13-year-old students. Next, using the guiding principles, the five case study principals nominated Year 7 and 8 teachers who they perceived to be effective in teaching reading. Furthermore, the reading results from the assessment criteria of the different standardised testing by the schools, showed overall improvement in students' reading levels and/or stanines in relation to their chronological ages over a one-year period, or positive achievement in comparison to the achievement of students from similar school types (as discussed in Chapter One). This improvement in reading levels was over and above the

expected incremental gains students would make as they progress through their years of schooling. Finally, the positive commentary in the most recent Education Review Office (ERO) reports on the five schools (available on the New Zealand Ministry of Education website <http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/reppub.nsf/>) supported these findings.

Conducting the interviews

Fifty-one participants were interviewed across the five schools: five school literacy leaders, five school principals, eight Years 7 and 8 teachers (two of whom were also their school's literacy leader), ten parents of Years 7 and 8 students of differing reading abilities selected by the principals and teachers, and 25 Years 7 and 8 students representing a range of reading abilities selected by the teachers. I asked each of the Year 7 and/or 8 teachers who had been identified as effective teachers of literacy and who were part of the wider research project, to select, from their respective classes, three to four boys and girls who represented a range of reading abilities. The 25 children selected came from eight classrooms, two classes from each of Schools A, C and D, and one class from each of Schools B and E. There were twelve males and thirteen females. Eleven were from Year 7 and fourteen from Year 8

To ensure consistency in the interviews, my co-researcher took a lead with the questioning while I took notes and followed up any areas that needed further clarification. By having two interviewers I hoped that a richer understanding would be gained from the interviews. Each participant was interviewed individually, apart from the students who were interviewed in a focus group of three to four at their respective schools. At each school, the principal had been asked to select two parents, one from a high progress reader and one from a low progress reader. At the five case study schools, effective teachers of reading in Years 7 to 8 were nominated by their respective principals to be involved in the study using the foundational selection criteria discussed earlier. Asking principals to nominate or confirm that teachers were effective in teaching reading concurred with the UK study on effective teachers of reading. The UK principals were asked if they agreed that the teachers nominated by an expert group were effective teachers of reading (Poulson, et al., 2001; Wray, et al., 1999, 2000).

Questions were used as a guide to structure the interview but did not limit discussions to a predetermined agenda (Rapley, 2007). The interviews each took approximately 45 minutes to complete were audio-taped and later transcribed.

The observations

All of the eight teachers were observed teaching reading. In this time informal notes were taken to gain an understanding of the classroom culture and the wider reading practices. However, in particular, during a guided reading lesson in each class my co-researcher took ‘in situ’ written running records focusing on the overview of the reading sessions while I completed the observational survey. Having two observers, both examining and recording what was happening through different lenses allowed for multiple perspectives of the interactions during the guided reading lesson. The number of students in the reading groups observed when using the observational survey varied from five to eleven. The observational surveys included gathering data on the student involvement during the instructional reading. Across the eight classrooms, one group in each class was observed using the observational survey. This in total included 53 students’ responses being collected.

Sequence of gathering data

The data gathering was completed at one case study school before moving to the next. The main reason for this was that it can become confusing if studies are carried out simultaneously with too many names to remember and diverse data to manage.

The analysis process

The strategy for this study was a predominantly qualitative, multiple/collective, critical case study (Flyvbjerg, 2007; Stake, 2005; Yin, 1994). The design of the research study was driven by the research questions and this influenced from whom the data were collected and how this would be collected and analysed. The investigation sought to identify the actions and interactions in these critical case studies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990b). The objective of the research was to understand the conditions that give rise to the central phenomenon – the context in which it occurs and how it is managed and handled. This was done by focusing on what is common about the cases and in particular common across the different subgroups of participants in the case studies. As the goal was to generalise across the multiple case studies, a level of abstraction was needed in conducting the analysis of the data.

The analysis process

The analysis strategy drew on particular analysis processes used in grounded theory which included open/initial coding, axial coding and selective coding strategies (Charmaz, 2003;

Strauss & Corbin, 1990a). This provided a model of systematic inquiry where the data could be compared.

Initial or open coding

At this stage of the research open coding helped break up the data to identify some of the conceptual categories within the data. Charmaz (2003) refers to this as initial coding where, as the researcher interacts with the data, they begin to interpret it and develop emergent codes. During data collection at the five case study schools, an initial analysis of the data began to lead towards an initial understanding of the data. Once the data collection was completed, early codes /categories were developed in consideration of the research questions and guided by the literature and the theory (Harry, Klinger, & Sturges, 2005). Thirteen early categories were identified: effective literacy practices, assessment methods, plateaus and dips in reading achievement, family and home influences, parental influences and reading habits, reports and surveys of reading achievement, motivation and engagement, reading skills, critical literacy, gender issues, library use, transitions from primary to secondary school, and ethnicity. These codes tended to be descriptive requiring nominal or no inference further than the segment of data itself. This enabled a clearer definition of the data that fitted with particular codes and helped to define as precisely as possible coding categories (Harry, et al., 2005). Using these categories as a guide, the overall data were initially scanned to look for patterns and any discrepancies.

All the data were read and reread to begin to generate provisional labels. These labels became a first level of inference. As the study progressed it became apparent that each subgroup of interviewees (principals, literacy leaders, teachers, parents and students) had similar codes but also needed distinct categories to best understand the issues and circumstances that fitted with their individual situations. These data from the different subgroups were analysed individually and collectively in a simultaneous manner to get the most out of understanding the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Next, an independent research assistant analysed and segmented the data from the transcripts looking particularly at the data from each of the subgroups of interviewees (principals, literacy leaders, teachers, parents and students). I then looked at the categories identified by the research assistant and these were compared to the early coding. This allowed me to identify the need for a number of refinements, deletions and additions of codes across the

subgroups of participants. Table 3 outlines the differing codes identified from the initial analyses of each of the overall data from the respective subgroups.

Table 3
Initial categories for coding the data for each subgroup of interviewees

Principals	Literacy Leaders	Teachers	Students	Parents
Effective practices	Effective practices	Effective practices	Effective practices	Effective practices
Assessment tools	Assessment tools	Assessment tools	Assessment tools	Assessment information
Transitions from primary to secondary school	Transitions from primary to secondary school	Transitions from primary to secondary school		Transitions from primary to secondary school
Home school partnerships	Home school partnerships	Home school partnerships		Home school partnerships
Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers	Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers	Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers		Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers
Reading skills: decoding, comprehension and vocabulary	Reading skills: decoding, comprehension and vocabulary	Reading skills: decoding, comprehension and vocabulary		
Motivation and engagement	Motivation and engagement	Motivation and engagement	Motivation and encouragement	
Instructional reading strategies	Instructional reading strategies	Instructional reading strategies	Instructional reading strategies	
Whole school environment and professional development	Whole school environment and professional development	Whole school environment and professional development		
Multi-literacies	Multi-literacies		Multi-literacies	
Literacy pedagogy	Literacy pedagogy	Literacy pedagogy		
Challenges and barriers	Challenges and barriers			
Ethnicity	Ethnicity			
Helping teachers to improve their practice	Helping teachers to improve their practice			
			Student attitudes to importance of reading	
			How teachers assist students in reading	
			Student preferences in reading time	
			Student dislikes during reading instruction	
			Library use	Library use
			Parental reading habits	Parental reading habits
			Home and outside reading habits	

For example, added to the principals' and literacy leaders' codes were 'helping teachers improve their practice' and 'challenges and barriers', while the code of 'parental influences and reading habits' was refined to 'home-school partnerships'. In the data analysis of the students several codes were deleted when there was insufficient data to support the code. New ones were created when there was enough data to support the code. For example, 'student preferences in reading time' and 'how teachers assist students in reading' were added, while 'plateaus and dips in reading achievement' and 'critical literacy' were deleted.

Axial coding

Axial coding was then used to conduct a second order analysis of the interview transcripts from the case study schools. Axial coding, unlike open coding which breaks the data open, attempts to connect things to each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1990a). The axis is put through the data connecting the codes identified during the open coding. This entailed looking for concepts and themes in the data that linked with one another and/or formed clusters to give a denser net of support for emerging main ideas within the qualitative data. Charmaz (2003, p. 260) described this as "making connections between a category and its subcategories."

To do this the original transcripts were re-analysed against the research assistant's segmented data of each school to identify any possible differences in categorisation. Using this re-analysis of data, each subgroup (for example, all of the eight teachers' transcripts) of interviewees across the five schools were analysed to look for similarities and differences. Some areas were added to the categories. For example, when analysing the teacher transcripts the use of the library and picture books were identified as recurring themes. Other areas were segmented for finer analysis. Also, when analysing the data from the teachers, the code 'reading skills: comprehension, decoding and vocabulary' had been grouped together as key skills 10- to 13-year-old students frequently use when reading. However, during the axial coding these were changed to three discrete subcategories of comprehension, decoding and vocabulary. (Refer to Appendix D for a table of the axial coding.)

In order to gain a deeper perception of the data, my co-researcher, who had been part of the interview team independently analysed the transcripts to identify codes. This included looking for similarities and differences across the subgroups of interviewees in each of the case study schools. Next, she reviewed the coded data from the research assistant to identify any differences. To compare these themes and look for similar patterns or any discrepancies

that had emerged, the three independent analyses were discussed with my co-investigator. A decision was then made on whether they needed to be considered relevant and part of the findings.

A fuller understanding occurred when examining the perceptions and opinions of the different subgroups of interviewees. For example, comparisons between what the teachers and the students perceived as supporting their reading allowed the researcher to better understand the inter-relationships and interface between the teacher and students. This has been highlighted in the work of Bishop (2003) in New Zealand, who showed that there are often major gaps between teachers' intentions, teachers' beliefs of what is happening, and the student experience.

Selective coding

At this stage, I was ready for the final pass through the data and had identified the major themes of the research project. The selective or focused coding was used to scan the data and prior codes in order to organise the overall analysis around several core ideas (Charmaz, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990b). During this process of selective coding the major concepts or codes that reappeared frequently guided the research (Charmaz, 2003). The focus was to identify the higher order predominant concepts and categorise them more precisely. As I made decisions about selecting codes it provided the opportunity to check how they fitted with the emerging theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2003).

Observational surveys

Seltzer and Rose (2006) advocate that when analysing quantitative data the findings must be contextualised. They describe an example of a classroom study of conversational turn-taking and questioned whether viewing this from a wider lens, if factors such as a whole school professional development or changes in district or state policy initiatives may have impacted on what occurred during the classroom observations. The structured observational survey data of the guided reading lessons from the five case study schools needed, as Seltzer and Rose described, to be analysed thoughtfully. The nature of the case study schools and the people within them needed to be considered when interpreting the numerical data in order for a contextualised story to be told to represent the findings (Seltzer & Rose, 2006).

In this endeavour, the numerical data (which comprised of the counts of instances of the predetermined criteria as outlined earlier in this chapter) from the structured observational surveys were recorded on a spreadsheet and separated into subgroups of the strategies that the teachers instigated during the guided group reading lesson, and secondly, into each group of student's involvement in their respective lessons. These data were then presented in graphs or tables to provide a visual representation of the findings. To triangulate the data multiple sources of data were used (J. K. Smith & Deemer, 2000). The anecdotal 'in situ' running notes taken while the lessons were being observed were compared to the observational survey schedules. The original interview transcripts of the teachers were also scanned to help verify the internal reliability of the findings (Merriam, 1988).

Prior dissemination of my research

While undertaking this thesis I wanted to continually refine my writing by seeking external review. To help do this I have submitted articles for review with international journals. Seven articles have been published or are in press. They are listed in the section after the abstract for the thesis. In order to disseminate, share and receive oral and written feedback on my research finding I have also presented different parts of the research at several international conferences. During this process of international dissemination and review I have been very appreciative of the expert critical feedback that has supported the development of my thesis.

The trustworthiness of the research

Research processes should be sufficiently authentic or trustworthy in order to use the findings to mandate social policy (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (2005) contend that there is no single method or set of methods that "is the royal road to ultimate knowledge" (p. 205). However, it is worth considering evaluative criteria that can be used during the research processes.

Demonstrating credibility in qualitative inquiry has been viewed by Charmaz (2005) as the evidence of consistency as well as strong and logical links between the data and the researcher's claims. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this evaluative criteria as confirmability. Their understanding of credibility was described as the commitment on behalf of the researcher to establish truth. The desire to ensure that my research met the criteria of credibility and confirmability has been demonstrated by the continual and

sustained critique that the research has undergone. As discussed earlier, prior to completing my thesis, sections of findings have been sent out as articles for peer review to international journals and presented at a range of international conferences. This rigorous review by a range of international researchers has continued to provide me with constant analysis of the research process and meant that I have retrospectively refined and reviewed findings. By reflecting critically on myself as a researcher, I have come to know myself as a researcher within this research process. This reflexivity has provided a strong degree of *dependability* to the findings as I have continually questioned my identity and how that may have shaped the interactions with the researched and the way in which I have interpreted and written up the data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

In line with the constructivist paradigm, I sought multiple perspectives to illuminate meaning. This predominantly qualitative, critical case study research combined both multiple perspectives of different stakeholders and multiple methods of collection to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The rich and thick description of the data from these multiple perspectives allowed me to ensure that there was transferability. Although the findings of the five case study schools were particular to each school, a reader can use their own judgement to ascertain the transferability of the findings (Merriam, 1988). The combination of methodological practices and perspectives provided rigor, depth, breadth and richness to my research inquiry.

In Section Two, (Chapters Five to Eleven) the research findings are reported. Chapter Five discusses the role of principals in leading improvements in reading achievement. Socio-constructivist theory provides a foundation for analysing the links from different perspectives between leadership, school improvement and student learning.

Section Two

Chapter Five

Principals leading change

A principal, leading change in literacy learning gave a deep sigh and with a look of frustration lent forward and shared with the researcher his experience over a number of years, of many teachers' attitudes to reading in the final years of primary schooling:

For some reason teachers, when children get to year 7 and 8... they [teachers] think they don't have to worry about reading now and they can concentrate on other things. (Principal, School D)

Many studies show that school leadership is a key factor in supporting change within schools, but few have specifically considered the impact leadership has on gains in students' reading outcomes (Caldwell, 2006; Day, 2005; Foster, 2005; Moos, et al., 2008). This chapter focuses on factors that typify leadership in schools where such gains have been identified and explores the nature and quality of leadership that contribute to a school environment conducive to improving the reading achievement of 11- to 13-year-old students. It draws on the qualitative interview data, particularly that from the four principals and the one deputy principal who had been delegated by her principal to lead curriculum.

My aim was to explore, from a socio-constructivist leadership research perspective (Foster, 2005; Heck & Hallinger, 1999), the leadership style and practices of the principals of five New Zealand primary schools whose staff were identified as implementing systematic, regular and sustained teaching of reading in the final years of primary schooling. In terms of the particular, I was interested in identifying the behaviours, beliefs and special characteristics of principals and (where relevant) other school members that create and sustain a school environment conducive to the reading achievement of students in their final years of primary school. In terms of the general, I sought, in line with Foster's (2005) advocacy, as discussed in Chapter Two, to address the 'blank spots' in our understanding of school leadership and how it contributes to school improvement.

Findings and discussion

The five themes that arose from my analyses of the case study schools provide strong indicators that the attitudes, beliefs and actions of principals are associated with better than normal reading test results. Four of the five principals had only been in their position of principal for one year although the principal from School A had been the deputy principal of that school for the previous 10 years and had led literacy development in that role. It would seem that these principals may have had some influence on improving the literacy learning environment during the time of their first year of principalship, as the students in their schools had shown an improvement in reading scores or positive achievement in comparison to the achievement of students from similar school types (as outlined in the standardised test results in Chapter One) during the first year of their principalship.

Although the principals were each cognisant of their own school context and acted in ways that would best meet the needs of their school's culture, their main beliefs and practices were very similar. For example, the principals of Schools A and E, which had higher percentages of Māori students and also School E that had higher percentages of Pasifika students, had developed along with their staff, a school culture that overtly acknowledged and valued the cultural experiences that these students brought to their learning. However, the principals and their staff at the other schools, with very low percentages of Māori and Pasifika students were cognisant of the need to develop a learning environment that supported students from all ethnic groups.

My discussion of the five themes that emerged begins with discussion of sustained professional development in literacy.

Theme 1: Sustained professional development in literacy

All five principals in the case study schools articulated the importance of professional development in literacy for their staff. They engaged in professional discussions with teachers and literacy leaders both informally and throughout the ongoing syndicate and staff meetings. During formal professional development sessions, they explored and refined school-wide literacy plans with their staff. Each principal said he or she had sought high-quality professional development from experts who fitted in with the needs and culture of their schools. The principal of School E had contracted a private literacy educational

consultant, while the principals of the other schools had called on the more traditional literacy advisors provided by the Ministry of Education. The deputy principal of School C had also changed the school's facilitator from one educational provider to another because she and the rest of the teaching staff considered that the other person would better fit their school's specific needs. The principals' approach to professional development accorded with Henze and Arriaza's (2006) claim that school leaders need to influence and support the development of the ethos of their educational environment by progressing and negotiating reforms through both spoken and written discourse. Their approach also aligned with conclusions drawn by Sergiovanni (2005) from his examination of educators working together. As Sergiovanni noted, these individuals are interdependent within the school, they all, whether teacher or leader, need to be involved in decisions affecting student learning.

In all five schools, the professional development focused not only on literacy matters but also on ways of developing the school ethos so that they could offer students, communities and staff a safe and successful learning environment that would enhance the overall culture of the school and evolve from shared goals and purposes for school improvement (Foster, 2005). The principals were aware of the need to ensure that the external literacy consultant not only fitted with their overall goals for developing their school, but would also be respected by their staff. One participant said:

We planned something that we thought would be beneficial for our school and then we pulled in people like [name of educational literacy expert consultant] and various other people that we thought could offer us something. It was quite in-depth, and we had all of our staff members focused on it. (Deputy principal, School C)

The principals were actively involved in this professional development as learners, and collaboratively engaged in professional conversations and problem-solving with their teachers and literacy leader/s. By making connections with the existing values and expertise in literacy and learning within the schools, the principals considered they had been able to establish – and had become active learners within – a strong school-wide culture of learning, a consideration borne out in interviews with teachers and parents. However, the principals were aware that to work together towards further school improvement they not only needed to acknowledge the existing values and expertise within their school, but also that they, along with the staff, would need to be active participants in the professional development with the external literacy consultant. Day's (2005) research on successful principalship in the UK

(successful in terms of raised levels of students' attainment) found that all the principals had "seen and pursued connections between their own values, and those of the community within and without their schools by establishing and building cultural capital, which itself, they believed, would contribute to achieving the attainment agenda" (p. 277).

The five New Zealand principals reported that the ongoing literacy professional development for teachers within their schools included opportunity for observing fellow teachers and keeping abreast of recent research on reading and effective teaching approaches. For example, one commented:

It was quite good to have an outside person [the external literacy consultant] that could actually come in and see what the teachers were doing, then to give some feedback and do some modelling ... He took six or seven Year 7 students and he had the Year 7 teachers sitting and watching, and then he did the reading with them. He then repeated it with the Year 8 teachers. (Principal, School E)

The New Zealand Ministry of Education had introduced a policy to provide curriculum release time (CRT) for all primary teachers, which allowed principals to collaboratively facilitate opportunities for ongoing professional development within their respective schools. The principals reported embracing this provision for professional discourse, and said it had been particularly useful in helping staff link theory with practice. Staff, the principals said, were able to reflect on their current practices in light of new research, share their existing knowledge and discuss new practices implemented or trialled in their classrooms. One stated:

We also have school-wide PD [professional development in literacy], so we are all paddling the same waka [canoe]. We have a lot of observations ... teachers within their CRT time ... it is part of their appraisal process. A lot of professional reading groups, as in morning readings [groups of teachers meeting to discuss literature on literacy and learning]. Last term, it was just readings of interest—items that I found or other staff members found. This term we are particularly looking at Māori student achievement. (Principal, School A)

When educational leaders develop spaces within which diversity, including cultural diversity, is respected across the school and wider community, opportunities arise for dialogic exchange, and issues are addressed rather than silenced (Shields & Sayan, 2005). The principals acknowledged the central role that particularly able teachers bring to supporting principal-facilitated school improvement (Foster, 2005). However, accomplished teachers and those with leadership roles are often sought by other schools, and progress

made within one school can be set back when these staff leave, as School C found. The deputy principal told us that two key staff who were encouraging and collaborative had moved to other schools. This, said the deputy principal, was making it more difficult to implement and sustain change.

We have had a couple of key staff go, who were really good at doing that bonding and doing that encouraging, so [once they left and] we tried to get the critical friend going that was a bit of a hard sell because basically people were a bit wary.
(Deputy principal, School C)

The deputy principal explained how the loss of the two key staff whom had been trusted and respected, meant for some teachers other approaches needed to be put in place for those teachers to feel comfortable and ready to trial new teaching strategies.

Theme 2: School-wide use of standardised assessment to monitor achievement and identify specific needs

In my five case study schools, principals wanted to use assessment as a means of monitoring and identifying specific needs rather than as a means of accountability. They actively encouraged teachers to use the analyses from their standardised reading tests to identify areas of need. For example, a principal and a literacy leader commented that:

We have their STAR data ... most of the feeder schools do STAR, so we have their STAR data from Year 6. We do the STAR test at the beginning of the year ... We analysed that really in depth and the LDO [literacy development officer] was really good because she took us right back into it. ... Tamara (pseudonym) [literacy leader and teacher at the school] was really brilliant at doing the PD. She did stuff with her class, then she would put it up on the data projector and go through it with the staff and unpack it and we could see. (Deputy principal, School C)

We looked at a page in the manual [on interpreting standardised test results] about how you have got kids at risk—critical at risk. So we looked and printed off all of our data, our class data, and then we just highlighted all of those that form our target group. Then we put that on our school-wide data. (Literacy leader, School D)

One principal encouraged the staff at their school to assess data from the testing and share that information with schools in their regional cluster. This approach not only helped alert the teachers to areas that needed further explicit teaching and expertise but also confirmed for them, (because of the comparative approach across a cluster of schools), that this approach was a valid one. He said:

There had to be work done about the data to put in front of the staff, about the reading level of the students. As you have seen in our stats coming in, there are significant numbers of them at that critical level of Stanines 1, 2 and 3.7 It is quite alarming, and we just can't ignore it. Being part of a cluster with our contributing schools ... we have been sharing all the way across, and when we look at the data, it just leaps out at you. (Principal, School E)

The principals were using the assessment data to raise the reading achievement for all students in their school. This finding gives detail in a New Zealand context to the UK study by Day (2005) who probed the work of 10 successful head teachers in the UK. He concluded that these leaders and their stakeholders had recognised the need to develop a means of aligning the demands of the government for increased measurable student outcomes, in a rather narrow range of curriculum areas, with their own larger views of what comprises student achievement. Day's study has relevance for New Zealand educators, given that the New Zealand government is now emulating the national student testing that is an intrinsic part of the UK education system. As Black (2008) found, high-stakes test-centred policy of the kind that school leaders encounter in the UK and the US educational arenas create tension and conflict for leaders intent on pursuing and framing the wider democratic functions of schooling. They explain that using standardised testing in ways that go beyond the purely accountable can be seen, in respect of a government's hidden agenda, as a marker of effective leadership.

According to the principals at the case study schools, identifying students' reading needs in early schooling allowed teachers to develop intervention strategies at an early stage of the children's schooling, with benefits for the children's literacy downstream. The principal at School A was using test results of children at five years of age to target reading needs at that early stage. She said this:

Our children who come from preschools are below our national average. Our School Entry Assessment data is really poor, but by the time they are six years, they are above average, so our board [the school's board of trustees] has put great emphasis on small class numbers in the first years [of schooling], and they have funded teachers until this year, where we get a 1 to 18 [teacher-to-student ratio] funding, but we would have done that anyway. We had been doing that for years. As a result of that, the children who start at five are very rarely poor readers by the time they reach their final years at our school. We might get one or two kids at each year level who aren't going to make it. They are our special needs kids, the children that are

⁷ Stanines are used to measure reading results in the STAR testing, with 1 being the lowest score and 9 the highest.

below—we have highlighted them. We also have the children that are brought in, our transient kids, because they come from other schools. (Principal, School A)

The three principals whose school year level commenced at year one reported that they were seeing in their schools the benefits of these types of feedback loop at the entry and early levels of their students' primary schooling, and they stressed these measures as a sound means of linking testing to whole-school literacy achievement strategies. However, the principals observed that students who moved schools frequently worked against this long-term intervention strategy to raise achievement in reading for all students in the schools. This finding builds on the work of Henderson (2008b) who found children whose parents' residential mobility (such as itinerant farm workers) were often perceived by teachers as underachieving in literacy because of the 'predictable and 'natural' consequence of a mobile lifestyle (p 175)'. Arguably, those in leadership in schools need to consider how to address these teacher assumptions.

Theme 3: A collaborative environment with whole-school commitment

The five principals were very aware that teacher commitment to professional development is critical. They were aware of the complex nature of setting up professional development that was likely to engage teachers and thereby enhance student achievement. In respect of my study, the principals' focus was on development directed at supporting and developing teachers' understandings of literacy pedagogy in order to help teachers enhance students' reading achievement. This comment from one principal reflects the responses of the other principals:

It is more complex teaching, I think. It is not a matter of having the children just reading aloud and reading just for mileage; they have got to have some depth in that, and that takes some preparation. It takes some complex thought of how to work that in a class where you have still got to deal with multi-levels. So you have still got to meet the children's needs. (Principal, School B)

Mindful of this complexity, all five principals had a strong and active focus on facilitating whole-school collaborative professional development in literacy. They also were adept at looking for alternative sources of funding for extra literacy support in order to provide ongoing sustainable school-wide learning environments. They acknowledged the vital role that literacy facilitators play in promoting whole-school commitment, not just in the short term, but also across the long term. She said:

We [the principal, literacy leader and deputy principal] had those things [professional development in literacy], but we also wanted to look at sustainability as well, and you could do that for one or two years and have a very intensive thing, but really it needs to be ongoing. You actually need to ensure that it carries on. We haven't got the answers, but we have actually increased our teachers' knowledge and ability, capabilities, and I think we have increased the willingness to share and the professional conversations. (Deputy principal, School C)

This willingness on the part of the principals to share goal-setting and decision-making and to be involved in professional conversations with their staff demonstrated a two-way trust between principal and teachers. This aligns with the findings of (Shields & Sayan, 2005) who concluded that such trust gives teachers the feeling that their school environment is a safe place in which to express views and take the risks associated with changing their pedagogy. Furthermore, according to Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) from their assessment of teacher professional learning and development, these authors cautioned that while professional communities can be a vehicle for change, the time that colleagues spend collaborating and discussing issues can sometimes simply reinforce the status quo.

Principals who are involved in school-wide discourse about pedagogy and (in the case of my study) whose understanding of literacy in general and reading in particular is grounded in theory, can articulate pedagogy of a kind that will help teachers make the changes necessary to improve learning outcomes (Stewart & Prebble, 1993). This was more particularly the case for the principal at School A who had completed study as a reading recovery teacher and also for the deputy principal at School C who had a lead role in all curricula within the large intermediate school. The deputy principal had completed a Master's qualification which included courses in literacy learning. Overall, each of the five principals was able to articulate and contribute to discourse on literacy pedagogy. For example, this principal knew that word-level fluency not always equates to comprehension.

When you have a look at what that often means for the students, they are often decoding at a high level but their comprehension is quite significantly different, quite lower. (Deputy principal, School D)

This principal's further comments demonstrated her understanding that automaticity – fluency in oral reading – can seduce teachers into assuming that the reader is comprehending (Paris, 2009).

Two other principals articulated their understanding that comprehension of text occurs with repeated interactions that allow the reader to debate and interpret the intended meaning of the text (Paris, 2009):

It is not so much about the semantics of reading; it is more the comprehension side of things. I know that we had large discussions and large amounts of time spent on teaching children about inference in their work and things. It is less about how to read, but what they are reading, I think ... [that] is the important bit. (Principal, School B)

I think the next step is to concentrate more on the textbook reading, how to read through a text book, that sort of thing. We have done a lot of the narrative stuff. I think towards Year 8 we need to start doing that. (Deputy principal, School C)

In her report on the Reading for Understanding (RAND) initiative in the United States, Snow (2002) stressed that comprehension reading strategies are often minimally or ineffectively taught, with teachers assuming that comprehension will occur naturally in the process of reading. At the five case study schools, the principals concurred with the view that the teaching of comprehension skills should be a key focus.

Theme 4: Literacy leaders working collaboratively alongside teachers

The literacy leader at School E explained how teachers were to be released from their teaching so they could work alongside her to develop more effective reading programmes. She said:

I have modelled lessons in this little office with a couple of staff members. We have gone through.....we have just role played really. One thing that we are doing, coming up next week, as part of the professional development, we are actually paying to release teachers two at a time, and we are going to sit down and we are going to plan out term three's reading. What I want to do with it is not, 'Here is our lesson plan. Here are our objectives etc.' We have got all of that. I want to practically help them.

The principal had developed an environment of trust where the literacy leader and the teachers were supported to work together in improving their teaching of reading. Sergiovanni's views align with one of the main findings from Day's (2005) UK study of effective principals, which was that such principals facilitate a school environment wherein staff are respected and trusted.

In all five of the schools there was evidence from the manner in which the literacy leaders, teachers, students and principals commented about one another's roles, of trust and strong relationships between the principal, literacy leader/s, facilitators of external professional development in literacy, and the teachers. There was a school-wide trust in the teachers' abilities to develop and mature within this supportive environment. However, developing this relational trust had not come easily for all schools. For example, at School C, the principal reported that building trust, especially in professional development measures, had taken time, and that the school leadership had realised that staff needed not only to see the value of such development but also to be assured that it was facilitated by the best person possible. She noted:

We have quite a good staff. We have got good capability and everything else, but quite difficult too ... They [the teachers] were quite critical of PD stuff. It has been interesting to try ... to get something that actually works and that people will adopt. We haven't done the numeracy project for that reason. People didn't want it—wouldn't have a bar of it. We have learnt, from bitter experience, that if you haven't got the buy-in, it is pointless doing it ... So what we have done is we have looked around and we have found another intermediate school that was in the same situation as us, and we have looked at the person they use [for leading whole-school professional development]. We sent somebody out there to have a look at it. (Deputy principal, School C)

Another strategy common to all five schools was the development of trust between literacy leader and the teachers. This relational trust, which underpins exchanges amongst participants in the school context, aligns with constructivist theory, where social relations are central to a school's function (Bryk & Schneider, 2004). Constructivist leadership theories support participatory democracy and evidence-based practices. More particularly, these theories promote a situation where principals and teachers work together as a collaborative unit, with leadership distributed among the staff, and with staff trusted and respected relative to this process (see, for example, Day, 2005; Foster, 2005; Fullan, 2005; Haas & Poynor, 2005; Lambert, et al., 1995; San Antonio, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2005).

All five principals allowed release time for their literacy leader to plan programmes and support teaching colleagues. The principal of School E had actively encouraged employing a teacher to lead the literacy programme and brought in an external literacy professional development coordinator. The principal said that without the input of these two people, there would have been little change at this multicultural, low- socio economic status intermediate school:

If it wasn't for Sally [the literacy leader] being available to coordinate here at school and do a lot of leg work with a lot of teachers and the fact that Tim [an external literacy professional development coordinator] is excellent... this school would have just continued to be the same.

This principal had also drawn on special funding from the Ministry of Education to help support these initiatives to raise literacy standards. The wider national education system had put trust in the principal to use this funding in the best way possible to meet the school's specific needs. Trust is a top-down and bottom-up condition that ideally should occur right across the education system.

Similarly, two other schools were receiving external funding to support literacy leadership and learning. At School A, on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand, the whole school had been involved in a research project led by a North Island research institute. The research was funded by the West Coast Development Trust to support literacy achievement. The local community trust decided to invest in their upcoming generation of students and sought an expert research leader in literacy development to lead this study. This externally funded initiative supported several schools within the West Coast community to have focused professional development that was underpinned by research-based data. The principal described the benefits of her school being part of the research-based professional development.

We had our big report the other day that will go to the development trust because they put the money in. At the end we listened and it is all figures and things and Simon [pseudonym for the professor leading the research project] said teachers on the West Coast are better than most teachers in New Zealand as far as literacy levels go. So that was just a real pat on the back for us, because we [West Coast schools] went through the terrible Education Review Office report in 2003.

This instance provides an example of the wider community interacting with the school. The mechanism the Community Development Trust had used to support the children in their wider community was through providing funding to initiate research and professional development in schools.

The other school receiving external funding to support literacy and learning was School D with the funding of information communication technologies (ICT) to support literacy and motivation to learn. The home and the church worked together to support reading and learning of Year 7 and 8 students. The principal at School D explained:

Well basically, we had to do a lot of consultation with the parents because ...we were looking at user pays to start with because they are composite classes and we were going to have the option of going into a year 7/8 class and we had a lot of debate with the community. They [the community] felt, particularly with our Catholic character, that if we were going to do something like that, if we were going to do it, it should be across the whole school for everybody. It should be available for everybody [at all year levels]. The local church group came up with a grant. We got about \$11,000 from them so we have been able to keep the cost down to \$50 a term [per pupil in the ICT classes]. That is for everybody in year 7 and 8...They have Apple laptops – one between two. There are 16 to a class. There is an interactive whiteboard they have in the class with data projector and digital cameras and that is about it at the moment.

At School D, similar to Schools A and E external funding was used to improve the literacy learning environment.

The findings from the case study schools align with Sergiovanni (2005) who proposed that no single person can instil effective practices in a school. Members of a school are interdependent and joined by relational trust, not only within the school but also with the wider community and society. By pooling intellectual capital, school staff can learn and work together, but the wider environment in which they work must be an environment of support and trust, and also a place where there is freedom from censure and where teachers feel safe to trial new practices.

Theme 5: An expectation by the school staff that all learners will achieve in literacy

All five principals told of the ways they worked collaboratively with their staff to develop literacy-based teaching practices that had a clear focus on the needs of each child. This concurred with Moos et al. (2008) who stressed that realising the individual potential of all students is a foundation value of social justice. Three of the principals explained that teacher-aides were a vital part of their team during teaching practice directed at raising the achievement of low-progress readers. Two of them had the following to say:

We target ... the kids that need help across the whole school, and we use the teacher-aide time ... It is a prioritised list; they [the children] are graded one, two or three ... We start with the more at-risk ones first, and then after that it is really about the teacher and supporting in the classroom and what happens in the classroom; teachers need to be thinking and recording information. (Deputy principal, School D)

We have got individual support happening in terms of teacher-aide time. We have got six percent of children achieving more than a year below their chronological

age. That was Running Record-based. All of those children have teacher-aide time. There is also some cross-grouping going on according to need. Some individual children will move to other classrooms for reading support. (Principal, School B)

A teacher explained specifically how the teacher aide was used in her class. She said:

We have the teacher aide from 9 -11:30am solely for literacy and from 9-10am she is like a literacy listener, so it is targeting mileage. It is those kids that we know aren't getting the books out, aren't reading at home... From 10-10:40am each day she has a different focus with the group... We have targeted our stanine three children that we know we can move with a little bit of extra help hopefully... On Monday she focuses on extending vocab, Tuesday she looks at synonyms together with Monday's words, Wednesday is sentence comprehension, Thursday is close reading – paragraph comprehension. They are getting that in class, but it is just that one extra session that we hope will get it together for them. (Teacher, School A)

The principals said that the practice of using teacher-aide time to support low- progress readers and of using cross-grouping across classrooms to better meet the children's individual needs was not only enhancing the children's learning but also helping build a stronger school learning environment overall. The principal of School A explained how teacher-aides were used to support low-progress Māori students. She said:

As a staff, we looked at our Māori students and we identified the [children at] Stanines 3 and 4, the kids that you can move, and they were mainly in Syndicates 2 and 3 [grouping of classes at similar year levels, so we put extra teacher-aides in there to work in the classrooms during reading times ... Our target was to move quite a number of kids two stanines. We didn't quite get there, but we have high expectations. (Principal, School A)

However, this practice of using teacher-aides in this manner surprised me. In my practice as a teacher educator, I have often asserted that teachers, rather than teacher-aides, should be used to support the learners most at risk. However, the classroom reality often limits teachers' ability to have sustained time with individuals, and teacher-aide support may be the realistic compromise depending on their training, experience and the teacher support. This is a research area worthy of further exploration.

Teacher efficacy, in particular the extent to which teachers believe they can positively affect student learning, is an important consideration when considering the factors contributing to a whole-school environment where students are overall achieving in reading. The critical link between teacher efficacy and student achievement has long been recognised. For example, Bandura (1986), when discussing concepts of teacher efficacy, suggested two influencing

factors: The first is outcome expectation, which refers to one's expectations about the possible consequences of a particular behaviour. The second is individual and affective self-efficacy expectation, which relates to one's expectations of achieving or influencing a required result. When teachers are in a school where they collectively believe they can positively influence student achievement, they are more likely to confront challenging situations and persist in raising student achievement (Goddard, et al., 2000).

Instigating a focused approach in identifying low-progress readers and having a sustained plan in place was an accepted practice in all five case study schools. This approach was led or overseen by the principal or by those with literacy leadership roles within the schools. One literacy leader explained how the students on the lowest stanine levels in the norm referenced testing were withdrawn on a regular basis and taught by part-time teachers. She said:

We did the STAR at the beginning of the year and that was like a sieve, really just to give us a look at who are the intervention children here, who are our STAR stanines one and two...Amy [teacher] takes them four times a week. Our stanine three on STAR, Stephanie [teacher] takes those students. (Literacy leader, School E)

In similar vein to the other four schools, School A sought ways to extend the high-achieving students. The principal noted how:

Tanya [a Years 7 to 8 teacher] actually had a large group of G and T [gifted and talented] kids. She actually did her thesis at university on G and T kids, and she caters for those children. They are mainstream, but they do come out for extension and things. We keep our G and T kids in clusters, groups together of like-minded kids, and she has them, she caters for them. With gifted and talented children come some quite high-maintenance parents. When they [the students] are in Tanya's room, they [the parents] are quite happy because she does extend and push the students. (Principal, School A)

Her practice of clustering gifted and talented students was in direct opposition to that proposed by Treffinger, Nassab and Selby (2009) who argue that the practice of taking the students out for extension is not in-line with current thinking in talent development. For example, Braggett and Moltzen (2000), when discussing practices for supporting giftedness in Australia and New Zealand, suggest that programmes, such as the Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) programme or an enrichment programme, provide challenging experiences to 10 to 12-year-old students as part of their normal classroom programme. Furthermore, Treffinger, Nassab and Selby (2009), claim that the contemporary path to

supporting gifted education should focus on bringing out the best for many students rather than the traditional path of serving “a narrow, very precisely defined set of individuals designated as the gifted” (p. 217). Yet, although it could be argued that School A were reinscribing conventional and stereo-typical thinking in regards to their practices of supporting the gifted and talented students, this study has indicated that overall the staff were improving achievement in reading. Arguably, if more current practices had been initiated for the gifted and talented students at School A, then there may have been an even greater improvement in reading.

At School C, the deputy principal’s postgraduate study had helped focus her awareness on strategic and explicit teaching. She said:

I was working towards my master’s, and one of my research papers was looking at whether deliberate acts of teaching increase student achievement. I had data from there that showed [it did in my school]. ... I had four students, and each of those students went up at least two STAR stanines. That was with that vocabulary; I stuck with vocab, and I chose one specific area. (Deputy principal, School C)

This comment surfaces the benefit of personal professional development of teachers undertaking postgraduate study while teaching and the value of the principal and school in supporting this study. The deputy principal was not only using this knowledge in the classroom, but also sharing her learning and application of it with other staff. She collaborated with them to extend her research investigation. She observed, “We concentrated on vocab, but we actually looked at the teaching of reading, and we looked at all of the different reading strategies that we could use.” (Deputy principal, School C)

Frost (2007) stressed that practitioner research plays a critical role in supporting school improvement. For School C, the deputy principal’s engagement in personal professional development involving university study seemed to be benefiting teachers, class programmes, school-wide support mechanisms and, most importantly, the children.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the characteristics and behaviours of the principals of five New Zealand primary schools where standardised test results, positive reports from the Education Review Office (ERO) and informed advice from literacy experts showed that students’ overall levels of reading achievement were improving and/or well above national norms for

each school type. Moreover, this achievement was evident in the upper levels of the school, despite the general trend that shows reading achievement tailing off during these middle years of schooling. Theoretical perspectives (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993) have provided, in this research, a basis for analysing the connections between leadership and improvement in reading achievement of young adolescent students. Social constructivist theory illuminated how school leadership can influence the interrelationships within a school that promote participatory democracy and evidence-based practices, allowing teachers and students to engage together as a learning community (Haas & Poynor, 2005; Lambert, et al., 1995).

Commentary primarily from the schools' principals, along with my own observations, confirmed that the principals promoted regular and sustained reading programmes at Years 7 and 8 and saw targeted, sustainable, whole-school professional development directed at raising students' literacy achievement as a vital ongoing measure. This highlights the pivotal role of the school principal in leading improvements in literacy reading achievement school-wide, aligning with Caldwell (2006). He suggests that listening to the voices of principals who are leading schools where students' reading achievement is sound or has improved allows exploration of the leadership qualities and strategies that are critical in facilitating sustainable and effective gains in students' literacy outcomes. A similar argument is proposed by Foster (2005) who suggests that focusing on both the teaching and learning processes and the environment that support student learning might help us better understand successful school improvement and the role of school leadership in that process.

The principals in the five case study schools encouraged school-wide use of standardised assessment in reading to monitor achievement and identify specific needs to improve literacy outcomes for all learners. They were using standardised testing in reading achievement to identify reading needs at whole-school, syndicate, class and individual levels. Schools A and E were also strongly focused on identifying the needs of their culturally diverse learners and raising their achievement. Moos et al. (2008), in a similar vein, maintain that a successful learning community is characterised by recognising student outcomes and the individual potential of all students. These authors propose that 'student engagement, self confidence and self direction, a sense of identity, a sense of community and belonging and, of course, literacy and numeracy outcomes' (Moos, et al., 2008, p 344) are central.

The five principals at the case study schools strove to build a collaborative environment that favoured whole-school commitment to the professional development. They were intent on developing an environment of trust where literacy leaders could work collaboratively alongside other teachers. They worked alongside the literacy leader to facilitate change in literacy pedagogy, and they provided that person with the support needed to do this. And they clearly articulated and developed a school-wide expectation of achievement for all learners. These findings affirm Stewart and Prebble (1993) who pointed out, effective leaders need to be actively involved in the fundamental issues of curriculum and pedagogy if schools are to improve learning outcomes for all students. Educational leaders, including head-teachers and principals therefore are not only the heartbeat of school development programmes, but also the people who must assure the students and teachers that their school environment is a safe space where they feel they belong, are respected and valued and can thus share their lived realities (Shields and Sayani 2005).

All five schools consistently had in place a designated literacy leader who was a teacher with expertise in reading. The principals visibly supported the literacy leaders by providing release time so they could plan and implement literacy strategies across the school and provide leadership and support for their staff. These practices align with the literature which maintains that successful leaders who understand the multifaceted setting within a school, build practices where collaborative and democratic leadership is dispersed among the staff (see, for example, Day, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005). Many (for example, Fisher & Frey, 2007; Timperley, et al., 2007) stress the need for leadership that is focused on facilitating whole-school commitment to measures aimed at raising achievement and leadership that is prepared to work collaboratively with the teaching teams and others to develop a school-wide plan based on sound guiding principles. Advancing these propositions, this study showed that when principals supported staff and provided leadership in enhancing reading outcomes of 11- to 13-year-old students, this led to the school staff working collaboratively to developing key strategies to raise reading achievement, such as targeting reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. At School C, the deputy principal, who had been charged with leading all curricula in the school had completed her masters in education, specialising in literacy. Her deep understandings surrounding effective literacy pedagogies were evident, with this knowledge providing strong direction and support for advancing and enhancing the literacy development of the whole school staff. The value of staff in a leadership role completing postgraduate study within a school was highly visible at School C.

Essentially, the five principals had a vision that all students should achieve in learning in general and reading in particular. A similar argument is found in the work of Moos, Krejsler and Kofod (2008) who in their discussion of principals who raise achievement across a range of curriculum areas and build a positive school climate, emphasise the need for school leaders to be inclusive and to believe (and demonstrate their belief) that all students matter and can learn.

The principals in my study established relational trust with their staff to foster this vision. They invested time and resources into literacy leadership within the school and they were instrumental in providing and taking part with staff in ongoing professional development in literacy facilitated by external experts. However, they made sure that this expertise fitted with the school's culture. These skills and strategies that were evident amongst the principals at the five case study schools enrich the findings of other researchers (see, for example, Day, 2005; Foster, 2005; Fullan, 2005; San Antonio, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2005) who concluded that school leaders who recognise the complexity of settings within a school and its surrounds are better positioned to create practices where collaborative and democratic leadership is distributed among the staff, and where staff are trusted and respected relative to this process.

A primary goal for the five principals was creating and sustaining an environment in which members of their school communities (both within and beyond the school gates) could actively look to one another for support and collaboratively make decisions to provide optimum learning conditions for all their students. This finding builds on the recommendations of Henze and Arriaza (2006) who contend that because schools are embedded within wider social and cultural contexts, school principals are positioned between their teachers, parents and students, on the one hand, and the wider arena of the local community, board members and national educational policy-makers, bureaucrats and the wider public on the other. The distinct advantage of external funding obtained by different providers benefitted the literacy learning at three of the five case study schools. In line with Strike (1999), the financial support and political realities of society and the wider school community affect decision-making and the implementation of policy and practice within the school environment.

In summary, the themes arising from this chapter give clear guidelines for principals seeking to improve reading achievement within their schools. Such principals need to take account of the following strategies. Firstly, principals should consider providing staff with sustained professional literacy development using external experts and taking part with staff. Another supportive strategy is developing school-wide use of standardised assessment in reading to monitor achievement and identify specific needs. Next, building a collaborative environment where there is whole-school commitment to the professional development also enhances literacy development. Additionally, principals should endeavour to develop an environment of trust within the school so that literacy leaders can work collaboratively alongside other teachers. Finally, principals should articulate and develop a school-wide environment where there is an expectation of achievement for all learners.

This research study shows how professional development programmes that effectively raise reading achievement for 11- to 13-year-old students in a range of New Zealand schools occur over longer periods of time, have an extensive investment both in time and financially, are content based, offer sound theoretical understandings for teachers in the subject matter, and have whole-school commitment. The findings provide evidence that such programmes are most likely to come into play and be sustained if they have robust, active and well-informed direction from the school leadership.

Chapter Six focuses on how the literacy leaders, who were members of the school staff, worked alongside teachers to improve reading achievement. The interrelationships amongst the teachers, literacy leader and the principal become apparent as supporting reading is contextualised within the school environment.

Chapter Six

Literacy leaders and teachers working collaboratively

When discussing literacy professional development, Sally, an experienced and respected literacy leader at a challenging intermediate school, explained, with a resolute tone to her voice, “It needs to fit where we feel we are as a staff. It needs to be quite practical and hands-on so that when people walk away, they can think – I can try this with my class”.

This chapter explores the school-wide strategies implemented to support reading. It looks at the roles of school designated literacy leaders and how they work alongside the teachers of 11- to 13-year-old students and with the support of their principals to develop effective, regular and sustained reading instruction in year 7 and 8 classes. The chapter focuses predominantly on the data from the interviews with the literacy leaders and the teachers.

The exploration of the role of the literacy leaders when researching reading aligns with Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney (1975) who, when discussing learning and human development, argued that investigations should include the adjacent systems that may influence what can or cannot occur within the specific context, such as, for example, in the classroom reading programme. The inter-relationships between the literacy leaders and the principal, the teachers and the literacy leader, can be critical in providing a school-wide learning environment that enhances students’ reading development. Literacy leaders need to be considered and included when investigating how to meet the needs of all literacy learners as they are situated at the heart of motivating and changing practices in literacy learning.

Findings and discussion

Reading is not simple and is one of the most intricate accomplishments of the human brain (Wyse & Goswami, 2008). Thus, providing a school environment where all students enjoy and engage in reading and continue to improve their reading skills as they move through their primary schooling challenges educators. The Year 7 and 8 teachers and the literacy leaders with the support of their school principals in this research project discussed how they had worked together in their own school environments to endeavour to improve their students’ reading. The converging factors and events that occurred across the multiple case

study schools were complex and gave insight into the cases studied (Neuman, 2003). These included the delegated role of literacy leadership within the schools long-term, whole school professional development in reading, school-wide assessment of reading, staff demonstrating a sound knowledge of literacy pedagogy, teachers using questioning to focus on comprehension of text in the development of critical literacy strategies and intense work around vocabulary.

1. Literacy leadership

The literacy leadership in each of the five case study schools was designated to one person. The leaders ranged in teaching experience from those with seven to eight years teaching to others who had an extensive teaching career. All of the literacy leaders were female, four were also classroom teachers, while at School E, the part-time literacy leader position had been externally advertised as the principal contended that they did not have a person with suitable expertise on their staff. This decision aligns with Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) who contend that variable expertise can hamper the school's professional learning and suggest that capability and knowledge should not be assumed of teachers who offer to be literacy leaders in their school. The principals in the respective schools strongly supported their literacy leader by providing release time, effective resources and the ongoing encouragement of all staff to be active participants in the long-term professional development in raising reading achievement.

At all of the five case study schools, the literacy leader exhibited overt enthusiasm, dedication to raising literacy levels throughout the school by encouraging the more reticent teachers to engage in effective delivery and reflection on their teaching. When asked how important they considered the teaching of reading to be at year 7 and 8 all five literacy leaders emphasised the need for instructional reading with specific emphasis on developing skills for comprehending text. For example, a literacy leader said:

I am looking for specific strategies of comprehension to be taught and I am looking for the children to know what they are being taught –to be very aware of it. I am looking for just that really good scaffolding of the reading before the reading takes place. I am looking for children's experiences to be brought out so they can bring that to their reading. (Literacy leader, School E)

This specific focus on instructional reading in all Year 7 and 8 classrooms where comprehending text was emphasised counters reports of studies in classroom practice in the

upper-elementary levels where teachers spent little time on teaching reading comprehension (see, for example, Pressley, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2004).

The centrality of the literacy leadership at each of the five case study schools gives further recommendation to the New Zealand Literacy Taskforce Report (1999) which identifies the importance of the role of leadership within the school in the effort to raise literacy achievement. Not only did the taskforce recognise the pivotal role of the principal in leading a school professionally, but also alongside this focus the taskforce identified the importance of the role of a literacy leader as, "...a teacher or teachers with expertise in literacy learning having responsibility to provide guidance and support in classrooms as well as in the staff meetings that is part of the regular professional development of teachers" (p. 20, 1999).

2. Professional development in reading

At all five schools there had been recent and ongoing whole school professional development in reading literacy to endeavour to develop a collaborative and supportive environment for all staff. External expertise in literacy had been sought to lead the professional development in the case study schools. The literacy leader within each of the five case study schools had developed a conjoint role with the external literacy expert. Together, they were supporting reading within the wider school context. Their roles differed in that the literacy leader was continually involved in supporting reading throughout the school, whilst the external literacy expert visited the schools on a number of occasions throughout the year. For example, at School E, the school had a national literacy expert and researcher involved in their whole school literacy professional development. A matter also worthy of noting was that this literacy expert was completing his doctoral studies in literacy achievement so had a very current knowledge of research and literature in this field. This would have undoubtedly strengthened the quality of the delivery and content of literacy professional development programme he was leading at School E. Additionally, this school, a low decile multicultural school, had some of New Zealand's more 'at-risk' students in literacy learning in comparison to the other four case study schools.

The external consultant worked alongside the school's literacy leader and principal to raise reading achievement. By modelling teaching strategies to the teachers with groups of students, the teachers were able to relate to the authenticity of his suggestions. The literacy leader who was supporting the work of the external literacy consultant explained:

I think the staff is far more aware of the value of the reading that Tim [external literacy consultant] is pushing... But I do think they see – because of his input, and hopefully my follow-up... the real, real, gutsy teaching of comprehension strategies and also you are at a situation where you are eyeball to eyeball with a child, and you [say].... ‘Show me in the text where it says...; What do you think the author means by this? (Literacy leader, School E)

At School C, the school had been involved in a national literacy professional development programme but found that it was not meeting the whole school needs and staff were not engaged. Together with a group of literacy experts, the literacy leader and the senior school management team developed a professional development programme that was targeted to the individual needs within their school community.

Two of the literacy leaders at the case study Schools B and C shared how they had set up peer/buddy mentoring and coaching amongst the staff with differing success:

Once I have appraised them and they identify an area to focus on ... I buddy people up with a teacher who is perhaps stronger in that aspect of the teaching area so they can go and observe in their classroom and watch that best practice happening, take it back, set a goal for themselves and set it into practice in their room. (Literacy leader, School B)

However at School C, the attempt to develop a buddy/critical friend mentoring programme failed – possibly because unlike the school discussed above, it was not part of the school appraisal programme.

Tina (deputy principal) had somehow found out about the critical friend mentoring and she thought, okay that is something we can do and we tried it, but it didn't really work. It turned people off very quickly...It was threatening. In order to do it properly you need time. Although Tina worked really hard to get us release time –it fell through. There wasn't a lot of accountability either because we didn't want to make it something that was put into your appraisal. (Literacy leader, School C).

This aligns with findings from a recent best evidence synthesis of teacher professional development (Timperley, et al., 2007) that identified six elements in the professional learning context as important in order to make a significant impact on a range of student outcomes. These elements included providing sufficient time and using it effectively; engaging external expertise; teachers engaging in the learning process, challenging problematic discourses, interacting in a community of professionals, research based practices consistent with wider trends and policy and active leadership. In all of the case study schools the interviews indicated that these elements were articulated.

3. School-wide assessment of reading

At all of the schools there was standardised assessment of reading using predominantly STAR and/or asTTle. Although the literacy leaders, teachers and principals jointly reflected on this data to enhance individual teaching practices and identify individual, class and whole school needs, the literacy leaders had overall leadership in coordinating the school-wide in assessment. For example, at School E, the literacy leader coordinated an analysis of the data using the STAR results. A specific intervention programme had been established. Students achieving at stanine one and two (the lowest level) and another group at stanine three, were withdrawn from their classes daily. They had intensive teaching by experienced and effective reading teachers. The teacher said: “I have four reading groups. My stanine ones and twos go away to Nina who is a reading specialist. My next group up, goes to Rhonda who is the other reading teacher in my room” (Teacher 8, School E)

The reading assessments were used at all schools to strategically inform the teachers how to improve individual reading achievement. For example, these two teachers explained how reading assessments support reading. “We take running records with them every month. Those at-risk children are monitored every month and they are collected by our at-risk register team who then enter them on a database and have spreadsheets and monitor their progress” (Teacher 6, School D).

They [the standardised test results] give us a starting point to look at and... as the year develops we try to shift them on and we do running records individually if we think the children have moved on, or we just use our own knowledge and our basic instincts (Teacher 5, School C).

The literacy leader at School B worked alongside teachers to analyse test results. She said:

In this folder [school-wide assessment results data folder] we started off looking at STAR and learning a little bit more about how to analyse it and the types of things that we should be looking for.... and they (other teachers) brought along a collection of their STAR tests and we looked at them and tried to figure out where are these kids going wrong and are there any trends or similarities.

By working together the literacy leader and the teachers were able to develop a cohesive and focused programme for improving reading achievement for their students. As Afflerbach (2005) argues assessments should supply teachers with constructive diagnostic information that helps inform classroom instruction. Furthermore, it should provide parents with

informative and comprehensible explanations of how their child is progressing and how they can enhance their learning.

In line with this contention, the literacy leaders and teachers in the case study schools discussed how the teachers shared each student's individual achievement with both the student and their parents. This included explaining how their reading achievement correlated with their age related peers nationally. In these case study schools the teachers collectively believed it was possible to improve student achievement. A similar argument is made by Goddard et al. (2000) who concludes that teachers are more likely to tackle difficult situations and persevere in raising student achievement when they collectively believe that it is possible to improve outcomes for all learners.

4. Knowledge of strategies to support comprehension

In the five case study schools in this research project, instructional reading strategies were discussed that enabled students to build up their expertise in analysing texts. For example, the teacher at School C had a clear understanding of the processes she needed to facilitate with her students to improve their reading. She explained:

For me, unless you teach students and work with students and go through the processes that go with reading so they get a deeper understanding about what they are reading and comprehending and unless you take them through some sort of strategies to help them they will never really enhance their reading knowledge. (Teacher 5, School C)

She understood the discrepancy there can be between reading fluency and comprehension. She said:

I have got students who can read and read and read. They read novels, two or three a week, some can read one in a night. But that means nothing to me if the deeper concepts within the reading itself doesn't come out. (Teacher 5, School C)

The sound knowledge of explicitly teaching reading that was being sought by the leadership teams at the five case study schools fitted with Pearson's (2009a) contention that in the middle and final years of primary schooling, teachers need to explicitly teach comprehension. Pressley (2002b) has stressed that good readers unconsciously and almost automatically comprehend text, overviewing and constructing mental images, and later interpreting and evaluating the ideas in the text. For this to happen influential teachers need

to possess in-depth knowledge of reading, including content knowledge, and facilitate clearly formulated instructional strategies that support all students in improving reading outcomes (Ruddell, 2004).

The teachers in these case study schools discussed how they had critically examined the reading texts prior to teaching. Their planning often included the use of ‘post-its’ in the text to provide reminders of powerful teaching opportunities that the text provided in relation to the students’ needs. Similarly, the principals in the schools had a sound understanding of the critical role a teacher plays in motivating and engaging students to read. One principal said:

It is the hooking in - the being able to inspire kids to want to read. To be good teachers of year 7 and 8, the teachers have to have read the books... there are extracts in a book you can emphasise and work lessons around. (Principal, School B)

Teachers are a critical link to students achieving in reading (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a). When teachers have an interest in and passion for children’s literature and the pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach Year 7 and 8 students this can become another critical part of the puzzle in raising reading achievement.

The literacy leaders took on the role of working alongside the teachers to improve reading and reading comprehension. This included opportunities to observe fellow teachers during instructional reading and discuss resources. For example, at School D the literacy leader explained of the initiatives within her school to improve the teachers’ practice.

During professional development we have opportunities to talk. We share new resources into the school and talk about how they can be used. We often go through Effective Literacy [A New Zealand Ministry of Education text on effective literacy practice] by the chapter and pull that apart and talk about it. Our peer coaching. Going into other classes and seeing what is happening. It is quite challenging. It is something we are only just beginning to do and slowly introducing. It is certainly something that is a challenge for some people.

These types of experiences support teachers in developing their professional knowledge and in exploring and trialling new strategies. An example was teachers improving their skills in generating opportunities for the students to respond to questions about the text and analyse, synthesise, infer and predict information in and around the text. Nonetheless, what was evident in the structured observations of each of the teachers during a guided reading lesson (reported in Chapter Nine) was that many of the teachers tended to take a more authoritarian

role in leading the discourse. Opportunities for these 11- to 13-year-old students to be involved in productive and collaborative discussions in a supportive, but not teacher dominated manner, were not highly evident in all reading lessons observed.

However, the teachers did take time to ensure that the students were able to make connections and have their personal and/or cultural knowledge and experiences valued. This enabled students to more fully engage with the text and build on prior knowledge and experiences. A teacher explained:

My questioning, this term, has been around driving them to look deeper into the text and pull out bits and pieces and sort of helping them to be able to...I guess, sum up the story...also linking it to their own experiences. (Teacher 6, School D)

The students in Teacher 2's class were encouraged to formulate their own questions around text and discuss these together. He described how he motivated students' interest in text rather than through the common practice of setting comprehension questions as an activity following instructional reading.

The thing with comprehension questions in my view is that, if you give the children comprehension questions, they will look through the text and scan as quickly as possible, find the answer within five minutes and they will just start mucking around. So, you need to create an enthusiasm and a drive for actually wanting to do what you tell them to do and there is a reason behind it. (Teacher 2, School A)

Similar to Pearson's (2009a) work on reconceptualising and implementing reading in the middle years, the teacher went on to explain how he invited and supported clarification of tricky parts in texts. He said:

Once they see that the teacher doesn't have all of the answers and that they have something to offer, I suppose they are not afraid to talk. They are talking to each other. They are critically looking at these books rather than just reading them for just reading them. So there is a different depth there and they are looking at links, the whole meta-fiction, the whole linking of stories within stories. We talk about that whole meta-cognition, talking about what we are thinking about what is going on with us, where we are coming from. (Teacher 2, School A)

This aligns with Ruddell and Unrau (2004a) who contend that the outcomes of meaning construction demonstrate the types of understandings that the reader creates in their mind through their interaction with peers and the text. The teacher supports the reader in negotiating meaning but the reader is at the very centre of meaning construction.

5. Intense work around vocabulary

All of the literacy leaders and teachers interviewed articulated a real awareness of the importance of vocabulary for the development of comprehension strategies. According to Hirsch (Hirsch, 2003) explicit vocabulary instruction should not only include an environment that accelerates the incidental acquisition of vocabulary, but also provide massive immersion, for extended periods, in language experiences conducive to effective vocabulary learning. One teacher explained, “Sometimes I pull apart words. I might come to a word that I think over half the class does not understand what that word is, so I will talk about that word in context.” (Teacher 1, School A)

Vocabulary development can be increased by surrounding the students with vocabulary rich language (Pressley, 2002b). One of the literacy leaders described that in their professional development the link between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension was highlighted.

That came through [vocabulary] –the little bit of research that we did accompanying the PD was mostly focused on vocabulary and the link between vocab and comprehension. If kids aren’t understanding the words, then they are not going to be able to gain much comprehension of the text. (Literacy leader, School D)

However, Pressley (2002b) although urging more systematic teaching of vocabulary, notes that analyses of research to date, suggest that when vocabulary acquisition has influenced reading by improving comprehension, that the impact has not been large. He questioned whether increased vocabulary might more likely influence writing and speaking and/or comprehension of conversations.

Challenges to literacy teaching at this level of schooling

Providing and finding interesting texts to read with the students at this age range was a challenge. For example, two literacy leaders when asked about problems they encountered said:

Resources. Finding really good resources for guided reading - I tend to go for school journals and as I said to you earlier – I have done them to death. They have either seen them before –there are only so many part 4 journals. I don’t like, rightly or wrongly, anything that is sort of pre-1995. It puts kids off because that was before they were born. (Literacy leader, School C)

I think it is finding the material and making sure that there is a wide variety of material. It is just finding variety and then hooking in those other more reluctant readers. (Literacy leader, School B)

Motivating students, especially reluctant young adolescent readers, with texts that appeal and are related to their interest is critical. When a teacher does not have ready access to such resources, this is another barrier. Although these schools had been nominated as effective in teaching reading in the upper primary school there still appeared to be further resourcing needed to address the lack of appropriate reading texts.

Conclusion

In the five case study schools researched, with the ongoing support and guidance of literacy leaders, there was sustained and active teaching of reading. The teachers benefited from having a developing well theorised understanding of what they, as teachers, could do to improve reading and this was further supported with ongoing professional development in reading over an extended period. The literacy leadership, along with the sustained professional development, appeared to be at the heart of changing teachers' practices to improve reading outcomes for these 11- to 13-year-old students. This aligns with Moats (2004a) and Timperley and Parr (2007) who have maintained that improving outcomes in reading can be best supported by sustained whole-school leadership in literacy learning.

The literacy leaders, teachers and principals articulated a sound knowledge about reading. Although not analysed in this chapter, Chapter Nine of this thesis reports on the analysis of the structured observations of the teachers during guided reading. The observations found that the practices of several of the teachers tended to be teacher dominated, rather than allowing opportunities for student-led dialogic discourse. Nevertheless, the nature of the interactions amongst the literacy leaders, teachers and their principals in the case study schools showed that they were collaboratively supportive of each other and had strategically worked together in creating a positive learning environment to improve reading achievement in their school populations. The literacy leaders and teachers shared their understandings and beliefs about pedagogical practices and endeavoured to develop a supportive professional development environment for the staff. Within the school contexts, what was evident was the interrelationships and interactions amongst three key players, the literacy leader, the teachers and the principal. The external agency influencing change on the wider school component, was the literacy advisors and/or consultants who were able to, in particular work alongside

the school's designated literacy leaders to enhance and support reading for 11- to 13-year-old students. This conjoint leadership in literacy development supported the growth of knowledge and skills that the classroom teachers could trial and evaluate within their reading programmes to ultimately improve learning in reading for their students.

From this study, it would seem that in order to improve teacher competence in reading in the final years of primary schooling, teacher research may help further enhance understandings of the nature of effective and high-quality teaching of reading. For example, in these case study schools, this could include further and more in-depth discussion during professional development of the advantages of promoting dialogic discourse. This could be encouraged by a shift from the authoritative discourse led by the teacher, to one where students interact with each other to co-construct their understandings together and consider different points of view (Conley, 2009; Soter, et al., 2008). This proposition aligns with Ruddell's (2004) argument that the development of teacher knowledge needs to be carefully planned and implemented using ongoing literacy professional development which utilises the latest knowledge on effective teaching and literacy development.

The literacy leaders in the five case study schools played a significant role in supporting teachers and providing a cohesive alignment within their long-term, school-wide plan to improve reading achievement. Teacher knowledge of literacy processes was evident with teachers planning explicit instruction around text. Vocabulary knowledge and comprehension strategies were recognised as two key areas. School-wide assessment data and in-depth analysis of the implications of the results were discussed amongst staff. Regular use of assessment to guide effective literacy practice ensured that all teachers were accountable and working cohesively.

However, even with several effective instructional reading strategies in place at these case study schools, there were still groups of students who although they may have made gains in their own reading, were still not succeeding in reading according to standardised tests. Their reading achievement had improved but they were still below the expected reading level of their age-related peers. It seems clear that given the expected curve of distribution in standardised testing, that for all students to be at or above their expected level in reading achievement might well be illusory. It could be argued that teachers who can substantively improve reading achievement of all students in their class are indeed making a

difference in raising reading achievement. What this study does indicate is that in a range of school types, literacy leaders, with the support of their principals, and effective, long-term, professional development in reading with whole school commitment can improve reading opportunities for 11 to 13 year old students. Further research exploring schools where there is not regular sustained reading in the upper primary school would help build knowledge of the barriers that these schools and their teachers encounter and understand what types of supports can be put in place.

Chapter Seven explores the parents' perspectives of their children's reading development and their experiences and relationships with the teachers and wider school staff. As parents are another important component in supporting reading of young adolescent students it is critical to include their perceptions of how their children can be supported in reading. We can then begin to understand the wider systemic components that interact to develop a dynamic yet complex layer of support for all learners.

Chapter Seven

Parents' perspectives

Christina, a mother of four children, is slow to make eye contact. Hesitantly, the words begin to tumble out.

I am not a huge reader at all. I have always struggled with reading to be perfectly honest and I related much more to my middle two [who both have been low achievers in reading], than to my eldest and youngest children [both successful readers]... It was quite foreign to me. To be honest, I did everything I could to avoid reading right through school. A book would have been the worst present. I am telling you, it was that and a jigsaw puzzle; they were just the bottom of my list. (Parent 1, Pilot Study School)

The focus of this chapter is to begin to uncover parents' perceptions of their young adolescent children's reading development, along with both the parents and their young adolescent children's experiences and relationships with the teachers and the school during this process. The chapter draws on the interview data from the ten parents at the five case study schools and the three parents from the pilot study.

Many commentators suggest that parents play a critical role in the development of their children's attitudes towards and achievement in reading (see, for example, Baker, et al., 1998; Goldenberg, 2004; Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). However, the literature more frequently focuses on children being supported by their parents in the early years of reading and the benefits of home-school partnerships to engage parents in the education process (see, for example, Goldenberg, 2004; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009). But indeed, it can be argued that parents also play a crucial role in supporting reading during the later years of primary schooling. Additionally, research that includes parents' perceptions about supporting reading for young adolescents and the parents' experiences and interrelationships with the various players in the school environment is often not included in studies on effective teaching of reading (see, for example, these studies discussed in chapter two: B. M. Taylor, et al., 2000; Wray, et al., 2002). By exploring what parents of 11- to 13-year-old New Zealand students perceive to have influenced their children's reading development, we can gain a deeper understanding of how to provide opportunities and whole school and community environments where reading achievement is raised. As, Duffy and

Hoffman (2002) indicate, on the whole, studies on effective schools and exemplary teachers of reading, home-school relationships have been only cursorily examined. These authors call for research that probes into the kind of the relationships between the school staff and the parents in order to gain knowledge of how they are sustained and progressed. Therefore, in this chapter, I aim to explore the perceptions of parents of 11- to 13-year-old students and the strategies that they perceive improve reading outcomes. I wanted to better understand the lived realities of these parents' encounters with the schooling system. As outlined in Chapter Three, the parents were selected by the principal and the teachers to represent parents of Years 7 and 8 students with differing reading abilities.

Findings and discussion

The parents of the 11- to 13-year-old students discussed what they perceived supported their children's reading and learning in general. Most of the parents referred to the varying experiences of all the children in their family in relation to schooling, rather than totally focusing on their child who was at the Year 7 and 8 level at the time of the interviews.

Parents' attitudes and abilities in personal reading

From a socio-cultural perspective, home influences are of primary importance (Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997; Rashid, Morris, & Sevcik, 2005). The reading parents visibly do at home, how they engage with their children in reading and the attitudes they project about reading impact on their children's motivation in learning to read.

In my interviews with parents at the six schools (including the pilot study school), one parent at each school had been recruited who had a child that was underachieving in reading. Of these six parents, two indicated that a parent also had a reading difficulty and another two indicated that the father of their child had little interest in reading. For example, one mother shared her reading disability. She had four children, two of whom, unlike the other two had achieved well in reading.

I was diagnosed as dyslexic when I was about thirteen. My brother was severely dyslexic so when I had a daughter that opened the books and read – I was like 'wahoo'! And everything just came easy to her and it always has. You asked about, is it an advantage at school if they come in and it is easy? It is huge. It is massive.
(Parent 1, Pilot study school)

She then went on to discuss the self esteem of her Year 7 child who was underachieving in reading. “They can get very down on themselves. They can get very, “I can’t do it, it’s hard’... You could just see she was getting more and more behind.” (Parent 1, Pilot study school)

With two of the children who were underachieving in reading, the father’s lack of interest in reading may have been influential even when the mother was an avid reader. For example, a mother who had a high interest in reading, was struggling to encourage her underachieving son to read. When discussing her husband she agreed that his interest in reading was low too. “Yes, it has been 24 years and I have never seen Brian (her husband) read a book.” (Parent 1, School A)

Similarly, another parent of a boy who was an under-achieving reader explained about her husband’s reading habits.: “No, he reads the newspaper...He will read the newspaper, fact books but try and get him to sit down and read a novel – no way.” (Parent 1, School B,)

The importance of these two fathers as role models in regards to reading was apparent. This concurs with research findings on Pasifika Year 6 to 8 students in New Zealand schools where Pasifika students who were achieving above their age-related peers in reading reported that their fathers regularly took them to the library and had an interest in reading (Parkhill, et al., 2005).

However, some mothers who were avid readers had differing influences on their children’s interest in reading. For example, a mother of two school-aged children, a son and daughter, who were enthusiastic readers reported: “I love reading myself, so I am a role model in that I spend a lot of time reading. I would read them a lot of books right from teeny tots right through.” (Parent 1, School C).

Other parents reported having children in their family who had differing interests and abilities in reading irrespective of the parent’s interest in reading, even the father’s. For example:

Because I have three [children] and the middle one is not a big reader, I think there is some sort of nature in it as well, but definitely, it is like anything – sporting families give great sporting opportunities to their children. We [my husband and I] are readers so we give reading opportunities to our children. (Parent 2, School B)

One or both parents' interest and abilities in reading appear to have been influential in encouraging their children to read. The comments of the interviewed parents indicate they had differing conceptions about reading and the type of texts that their child should read. For example, one mother discussed how her sons fell asleep when she read 'Enid Blyton' books to them but loved reading factual texts. Although her choice of books did not seem to engage the interest of her sons, they have according to her, acquired sufficient reading skills for other academic subjects. Perhaps, this parent's commitment to reading contributed to her sons' acceptance of the usefulness of reading on the basis of family modelling. Such a conclusion is consistent with Wylie and Hodgen's (2007) longitudinal study of academically competent children, in which they identified that the single most important variable impacting on achievement was maternal academic competencies. However, other issues also impact on reading achievement and engagement.

Parents shifting their child to another school in an attempt to find solutions to their child's learning needs

Three parents discussed dissatisfaction with a previous school resulting in the parents shifting to another school to better meet their child's learning needs. At times, the change of schools was in response to the experiences of older siblings. For example, a parent at School E reflected on an older daughter. This daughter's primary schooling, or lack of it, had been unique.

With my oldest daughter, when she was unhappy at school, I changed her school from a little town school that she was in to a tiny country school. She was still not happy, so I applied for home-schooling⁸ and got an exemption and I didn't do anything with her. I let her run riot. We had 60 acres and she would go out and chase rabbits and we would, because of the way we are – we would go to the library and when I had time, I would read to her. ..She stopped writing the day she left school. She didn't start writing until she went back to school in the third form [the first year of secondary schooling]. (Parent 1, School E)

This daughter had over five years of home-schooling and later went on to doctoral studies in the area of science. Clearly, the long-term effects of what appeared to be rather unconventional schooling did not disadvantage this learner.

⁸ In New Zealand, parents are able to home school their children if they meet a set criteria from the Ministry of Education.

Another parent shared her experience of a previous school not meeting her dyslexic daughter's learning needs. The mother had self-diagnosed her daughter as dyslexic. In New Zealand, dyslexia has only been officially recognised by the Ministry of Education since 2008, and prior to this it had been misused by a number of people in the wider community as a term to refer to difficulties in reading generally (Everatt, 2009). The child had attended a prior school before coming to one of the case study schools. As reported in the mother's conversation below the experience at that previous school had been negative.

I pulled her out of a school... I went along and the teacher said, 'I feel like I have failed her because she has no idea. She could get the beginning sound, but the end, the process, she just had no idea'. In addition, she [the teacher] said to me, 'But don't worry, she's got such a great personality. She will go into marketing or something.' I thought, 'That's great but if she can't read she won't be going anywhere.' They had been telling me, that she was fine, that she had done Reading Recovery. (Parent 1, Pilot Study School)

Reading Recovery is an early intervention programme used in 65 per cent of New Zealand primary schools (Ng, 2007) to improve the reading and writing skills of children deemed to be 'at risk,' after the first year of school. However, the funding allocation for Reading Recovery programme does not have a specific allocation for ongoing monitoring and there is no funding for taking children, who are considered to be at risk, back into the programme (Phillips, 2008).

Later in the interview this parent praised the present school (Pilot Study School) her child was at for beginning to address the reading issues that had not, in her view, been appropriately addressed at her child's prior school. Ideally, a school would endeavour to provide ongoing support for children who presented such reading problems after exiting the Reading Recovery programme, but clearly this did not occur for this child. Another parent found out about the severity of her twins reading disability when they moved from the primary school to the case study intermediate school.

They came to this school [an intermediate school] and I have to rave about this school because they went through their whole primary years – well I didn't know and wasn't informed, that they had a reading disability... It wasn't until they went to this particular intermediate that a teacher had enough of a brain to get me in here and tell me that their learning disability was so severe that she wanted to get them assessed for dyslexia or something or other. So, they wrote a huge report and got them funding and we finally got them through that. It wasn't until they were in the first year here that somebody actually thought, 'Why are these kids behind?' Unfortunately, primary school just brushed it off and put it into the too hard basket

in my opinion. They were doing everything that they thought they could and just put it down to....they knew my domestic situation and just put it down into the, 'Oh well, what do you expect from that sort of a home. (Parent 2, School E)

The parent had opposing experiences in two different schools. The intermediate school that her child was now at had been identified to the researchers as an effective school in teaching reading. This was confirmed by this parent's experience on how they were supporting her child reading. Clearly, the data from the parent only presents her perception of the events that unfolded for her child at the prior school. However, what is of interest is the differing experience the parent reported between the child's prior and present school. This experience of a school, in the parent's view, not supporting their child's reading, is similar to that of the parent above from the pilot study school. A limitation of this study is that the prior schools in question do not have any right of reply. Indeed, we do not know the wider factors from the home and community environment which may have also been influential in the situations the parents have described. The multiple layers of home, community, school and pre-school experiences can all impact on reading development in children (Weigel, et al., 2005).

The parents in this study had a range of experiences concerning the quality of their children's schooling and for some this had resulted in changing schools because of dissatisfaction. For another parent, the children's reading deficits were only apparent when they changed to an intermediate school where the teacher gave them a more honest assessment of the reading problems.

Seeking external assessment of reading achievement

Two of the parents discussed how they had sought an external educational agency to undertake an independent assessment of the child's reading achievement. One parent had self doubts about her child's earlier years of primary schooling at a previous school, before she had moved up to her present intermediate school. The parent had decided to use an external educational agency to assess the child's reading achievement before making any decision to change schools.

There were a couple of times that I was a bit concerned I might have made the wrong decision about which school she went to. The whole school thing – it wasn't supposedly the best school and why didn't she go to the other school on the other side of the road, because that was supposedly better... So, I actually took her off to Kip McGrath [an external educational agency] to be assessed, because the school will tell you that your child is doing really well, but my concern was, was this a big

fish in a little pond scenario? How will she fit once she gets to intermediate with a whole lot of other kids from other schools supposedly at the same level? Will she still be doing okay or will she be actually be dropped out. So, I took her a couple of times to Kip McGrath, just to see because they do these assessments. Each time they came back and said, “No, she is doing fine.” So, okay let’s relax. We know she is doing okay. (Parent 3, Pilot Study School, date?)

Once the teacher’s assessments were confirmed by an external agency, the parent was able to develop a trust in the school she had chosen for her child. This parent was unsettled by the opinions of others in the wider community about which school was supposedly the better. At that time of her child’s first years of primary schooling, she was concerned how the child would cope with changing to an intermediate school.

Similar to the prior parent, a parent from School B had, during his earlier years of schooling at a previous school, taken her child to Kip McGrath for an assessment but had differing results than the parent above.

They [Kip McGrath] do testing and they tested Andre because I was concerned. All of the teachers were telling me that he was at an average for his age and he was within that category for his age but I could see that he was frustrated. He was getting irritable. He was getting a bit angry and things because people were thinking he was stupid. I had him tested and they said he is mildly dyslexic and what he sees, what he hears doesn’t correspond. So they took him back right to the basics. Synonyms and everything. How to break down the words. He couldn’t see a word in a word. Sand - he couldn’t see the word ‘and’ even though it is the beginning of his name. They took him right back. (Parent 2, School C)

Both these parents had used an external agency at their child’s prior school. Their children were now at intermediate schools and they were both satisfied that these case study schools were providing focused teaching in reading to meet their child’s needs. Nevertheless, it would appear that using an independent agency to assess a child’s reading ability can be a helpful resource that provides parents with a means of cross checking on the school’s assessments.

The two cases of using external agencies to check the child’s reading achievement referred back to times in their child’s earlier schooling. It would be interesting to further explore if this need now exists, as schools today appear from anecdotal reports, to be more widely using norm-referenced testing of reading and sharing the results with parents.

Several parents were very satisfied with the reporting of their child's achievement in reading and how they were able to know how their child was achieving in relation to their peers on norm-referenced testing. Typical of many parents were these comments:

The way that parents get told where their children are – here is great. They say this is where 'normal' students are, this is where we expect your child to be, and then they say this is the scale and whether your child is below it. It is a graph. A parent can see it. (Parent 2, School E)

They actually sit down and discuss those with you and they tell you where your child falls and where the average child will fall according to that age and what is expected. (Parent 2, School D)

It was apparent during parent interviews that knowing exactly how their child was progressing in reading was an expectation. The norm-referenced testing used at these case study schools provided explicit information on individual children's reading achievement in relation to their peers nationally and was shared with the parents. Most of the parents had a positive experience gaining specific and regular information with the majority of these reporting negative experiences at their child's previous school.

Trying to get extra help for the underachiever

Of the six parents with children underachieving in reading, three expressed their concern about how they could access help for their child. For example, one parent, whose son was now progressing in reading, talked of her tenacity and determination in ensuring that extra reading support be provided by the school.

Unfortunately, they would slip through the cracks. I have asked for help for Tyrone with his reading right from probably year two or three and I am always told that Tyrone is not bad enough to have help. They need to be reading more than two years of their chronological age and Tyrone's never...I mean he only misses by a hare's breath and I am always told that there are worse in the class than Tyrone...Until last year when I got hold of Shelley (the principal of the school) and I came up with Tyrone's reports and I stressed that I was very concerned because if he can't read, it is not just his reading it affects everything. .. The end of the year his report comes home and says he seldom finishes his tasks which isn't good for Tyrone. You have to feel like you have completed your work and if 90 per cent of the class has completed their work and you haven't. Tyrone actually has an older step-brother and this is a very big problem too, that he never finishes anything. He has been unemployed from 15 – 24 probably. So, I like to think that he can start and finish things. (Parent 2, school A)

This parent was now satisfied with the efforts the school had recently made to address Tyrone's reading. Her concern and resolution to get help was further strengthened by the experiences with and attitude of the unemployed step-brother.

Another parent, who indicated that reading was not her strength, had children who had been in the Reading Recovery programme in their early years of schooling. She still had concerns about the lack of ongoing support in reading after the programme had been completed and in the subsequent years of primary schooling. Similarly, she was frustrated by the dissemination of information to the parents that a previous primary school had provided.

Yes, they did get reading recovery. But, unfortunately, (not) until I started jumping up and down ... A lot of parents, me included, get to a meeting in a primary school and they say 'the RTLB'⁹ – most of the parents don't even know what an RTLB teacher is. Unless they have had something specifically to do with one....and there are some teachers that just use things that go over (parents' heads). They don't put things in layman's terms for the parents and the parents don't want to seem thick, so they don't ask as I have found out by my experiences. (Parent 2, School E).

It would seem that at some schools, parents need to have the tenacity to 'battle' for extra support for their child's reading. This is of particular concern for those parents who had low literacy skills. Similar to the findings of Henderson's (2008a) research in Australia on the literacy learning of students whose parents were itinerant workers, the parents who had low personal literacy skills wanted their own children to do well in reading and schooling in general.

In this study, the parents of the students who were achieving in reading did not report any of these type of negative encounters with getting support for their children, presumably because the need had never arisen as their child was a competent reader. What is reassuring, is that at the case study schools, the parents were pleased with the support their children were receiving with their reading overall. For example, many of the parents, similar to the parent below, shared how the school had strategies in place to support the struggling reader.

He was taken from the class and given help. I came in and met Kay (a reading specialist teacher). She gave me some pointers as to how to help Kurt at home and I think that, that made a big difference. (Parent 1, School A)

⁹ An RTLB is a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour. They are employed by the Ministry of Education and provide support to a number of schools within their designated area. Their focus is on supporting teachers who have children who have problems with their learning and/or behaviour.

There appears from this study to be a definite link between schools that had been identified as effective by both the literacy stakeholders and the norm referenced testing, and the satisfaction of parents in how the school was supporting their child's reading needs. The concerns about lack of support with reading difficulties had on the whole been with the schools their children had previously attended.

Providing a supportive home environment for reading

Learning to read not only occurs in the classroom, but parents also play a significant role in setting children up for success in reading when they enter school and during their schooling (Padak & Rasinski, 2006; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). In this research, the parents, in particular of the children who were succeeding in reading at school, discussed how they had read to their children regularly from a very early age and continued to provide opportunities for reading.

We started reading when they were born in the hospital. I would breastfeed and I would read, and I would read aloud, because it seemed to soothe both of them. When Gina was a baby, I would be reading to Tim. Books were always big... So, when Gina was a baby she was just accustomed to a big pile of books and that has flowed through. They have always read and they will go to bed with a big pile of books. (Parent 2, Pilot Study School)

One parent of a child who was succeeding in reading discussed how she read to their child from an early age, and still continued that habit.

I read to him right from the beginning... I would say he would be only one of a few eleven year olds that still gets a story read to him at night. They all have a story. Dad does ... because I do tea and the rest of it, so he does reading. They all have a story read to them in the evening. (Parent 1, School B)

However, one parent found that her enthusiasm for reading and perhaps her selection of texts did not arouse interest in her three sons. They much preferred to follow their father's interest in facts and mathematics.

I have three boys –reading is not their strongest. My experience of boys... I love reading and I love reading storybooks but the boys like reading facts. If you gave them a book full of world facts or a book full of statistics they would sit there and read them, but they are not as enthusiastic about reading story books. (Parent 1, school B)

Parental reading habits and the types of reading activities and resources they provide for their children may positively affect reading outcomes. For example, Weigel, Martin and Bennett (2005) in their study of the ecological influences on children's literacy and language skills underscored the importance of recognising the multiple contexts, including the home literacy environment which impact on literacy and reading outcomes.

Library use

The notion of cultural capital holds that students' academic achievements are shaped by the family's, school's and their community's social and cultural resources (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). Access to stimulating and welcoming school and/or community libraries provides a critical resource for students and their families. In this study, most parents, irrespective of their child's ability in reading, reported that the libraries both at the school and in their community were used so their children could access reading material.

They tend to go to the library during the school holidays so they have something to look at, at home. Sometimes we will go to the library and they will get 20 books out and they will not read one of them. It just really depends. (Parent 1, School B)

We open the school library in the holidays here and so you have a lot of parents who bring their kids as well. (Parent 2, School A)

I encourage them by making sure they go to the library regularly, by making sure they take out library books. (Parent 2, School C)

We do use the library a lot down here. The kids use the school library. We have also had a lot of books at home through buying them and just through the library throughout the years. (Parent 2, School D)

Clearly, the provision of libraries both within the school and in the communities was well received and utilised to varying degrees by parents and their children.

Home-school relationships

Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital suggests that students who have values and attitudes that accord with those of their school are more likely to succeed than are children whose cultural dispositions differ. When schools develop a positive relationship with parents this can help develop common understandings and goals for supporting students' learning. In this study, all of the parents emphasised the importance of having an ongoing rapport with the school and the teacher whether it be in visiting the classroom if their work commitments

allowed them that luxury, attending interviews or receiving assessment results and school reports.

I think it is great that the parents can go in [to the classroom]. I think it is great when the teachers are communicative and happy about that. I think it must come down to communication. Schools can only do so much. I know that they provide evenings and times where parents can go and hear about different parts of the curriculum. Maybe even talking to them as individuals...just developing a relationship [with the parent]. (Parent 1, School C)

When asked how they knew how well their child was achieving at school, these parents' responses were similar to the others:

We do get really in-depth pathway records from school. (Parent 2, School B)

The way that parents get told where their children are – here is great. They say this is where 'normal' students are, this is where we expect your child to be, and then they say this is the scale and whether your child is below it. It is a graph. A parent can see it. (Parent 2, School E)

How do I know...well the teachers are pretty good at giving you feedback. That is basically how I know. Also too, by what they bring home in their homework. I make a point of sitting down with them each night and finding out what their homework is and they always have a reading book to bring home and they always have some sort of form of English or written language or assignment or essay that they need....and for me proof-reading really, as it gives me a good indication as to what they are understanding of what's been asked and also feedback from the teachers. (Parent 1, School D)

Parents valued the opportunity to know how their children were achieving in reading and to have ready access to the teacher, classroom and school. This concurs with other studies which promote extending the reading community with the provision of adequate funds for school and classroom libraries and promoting reading in partnership with schools and the home (see, for example, Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007).

Conclusions

Although this is only a small study of parents' perceptions and experiences of their children's primary schooling, it does begin to develop some important issues worthy of further consideration. School and community libraries were identified as an important resource for parents and school children. The school and teacher's role in facilitating parental involvement and providing a clear and accurate understanding of their children's reading achievement and development are critical. This can be implemented in a number of ways

including through individual discussions, allowing parents into the classroom, parent interviews and school reports, in addition to sharing reading achievement data in a way that all parents can understand. These findings further enrich the conclusions of other New Zealand researchers (Alton-Lee, 2003; F. Biddulph, et al., 2003; Wylie, 2004; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007) who maintain that effective home-school partnerships support students' learning.

One or both parents' interest and abilities in reading appear to be influential in encouraging these 11- to 13-year-olds to read. Many reports (Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005; Purcell-Gates, 2000; Wade, 1996) have established that the experiences children have in their early years are crucial for the development of sound reading skills. Parents are children's first teachers, and so have a vital role in ensuring that their offspring become linguistically competent. However, what this study highlights is that as children move from the early years of reading into the later years of primary schooling, parents continue to be influential.

Parents in the case study schools, both mothers and fathers, who modeled a positive attitude towards their own reading and that of their children appeared to have a positive impact on the reading achievement of these young adolescents. The link between fathers who were not avid readers and their sons who were not able or motivated readers was a finding that concurs with my prior research with colleagues on Pasifika students who were achieving in reading. These Year 6 to 8 Pasifika students reported that their fathers took an interest in their reading and took them regularly to the library arguably influencing their success in reading (Parkhill, et al., 2005). When a follow-up study was conducted by our research team on young adolescent Pasifika students who were not succeeding in reading, the students did not report that their fathers took them to the library and indeed, did not talk of their fathers' modelling an interest in reading (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afai, et al., 2006).

The findings from this study concur with those of several commentators (Baker & Scher, 2002; Rashid, et al., 2005; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007) who have concluded that as well as parent's level of literacy, their motivation and attitudes towards reading can impact on their children's attitudes and achievement in reading, reading comprehension and spelling. As F. Biddulph et al. (2003) maintain this can limit from generation to generation, income and employment opportunities, particularly for those with low levels of literacy. I suggest that educationists and policy makers need to work together to develop school and community

environments with contextual programmes to collaboratively enhance opportunities for literacy learning for both parents and their children.

Parents in the study had a range of experiences with their children's schools and developed strong opinions regarding the quality of their children's schooling. They were reporting on their encounters with the schooling system with all their children, not specifically on their year 7 to 8 child, who at the time of this study was in a school that had been identified as one where overall the students were making strong gains in reading. For some parents concerned with their child's schooling, utilising an independent agency to assess a child's reading ability was a useful resource that provided a means of cross checking on the school's assessments. Some parents of the students who were underachieving in reading had encountered difficulty and frustration when they sought further support from their school for their child's reading. At times, these were parents who had indicated they were not able readers but were aware of the need for their child to succeed in this area. It would seem the cyclical nature of reading achievement is exacerbated when parents with less ability in reading, and who tended not to be strong reading role models for their children, face the further challenge of trying to ensure the schooling system provides extra specialist support for their underachieving child. This finding gives further detail to Wylie and Hodgen's (2007) longitudinal study of New Zealand children which concluded that the maternal parent's level of literacy acquisition can have a profound bearing on continuing a cycle of underachievement in a family. In my study the added barrier of an apparently unsupportive school system places an at-risk reader in further jeopardy.

This study has ignited an interest for follow-up research exploring the journey of 11 -13 year old children who are underachieving in reading, including home, community, pre-school, school, specialist programmes and health issues. Implications for action include strengthening of communication between school and parents, and the development of structures by which schools, parents and communities can develop reading opportunities. Moreover, where there is reading failure, schools may need to engage family and community as well as providing remediation for the struggling student.

It would seem from this study that parents' encounters and satisfaction with schools vary. Parents' attitudes and understanding of reading development play a key role in influencing their children's achievement in and attitude to reading. If educators are trying to tease out the

factors that support reading achievement, parents need to be part of the important puzzle. This critical role that parents play in the development of their children's attitudes towards and achievement in reading (Baker, et al., 1998; Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005) allow us, by listening to these voices, to gain a better understanding of how we can work together to further enhance children's reading.

Following on from the parents' perspectives on supporting reading, Chapter Eight focuses on the students' perspectives of what they viewed as supporting their reading. Both parents and their children are centred in their home and wider family community. The types of interrelationships and interactions between those in the home environment and the school context can improve attitudes to and outcomes in reading.

Chapter Eight

Young adolescent students' voices

Cassandra, an eleven year old, purposively leans forward and locks eyes with the researcher as she details how her teacher supports her with reading. “Because she explains it to us really in depth, so we really get it and she does not just say, ‘Here you go – go and do that. She actually explains it to you, so that you get it!’”

In order to better understand the circumstances and environments in which a student improves their reading during the final years of primary schooling, I wanted to explore the students' perceptions of what they thought empowered them to be effective readers. This chapter aims to improve knowledge of how teachers, parents and educators can develop learning environments that support and enhance 11- to 13-year-old students' reading development. Allowing children a voice not only offers educators and parents information about how youngsters view their lives and feel about certain schooling realities but also gives young adolescents an opportunity to evaluate their own learning.

This chapter reports on 25 young adolescent students' perceptions of what they thought helped them become successful readers. The research has responded to the call of an increasing number of commentators who argue that educational research needs to shift to a more collaborative model that includes students in decisions regarding their learning, and that records and values their views and opinions (See, for example, Askew & Lodge, 2000; Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000). Furthermore, much research has focused on the early years of reading, yet it is during the middle and senior years of schooling that reading begins to ‘come apart’ (Freebody, 2009).

Findings and discussion

Here, I report and discuss the themes that evolved from the interviews with the 25 children across the five schools. The comments from the children illustrate points that were representative.

Students' attitudes to reading

As children move into their final years of primary schooling their attitude towards reading and their perceptions of the value of reading continues to be crucial. One of the readers in the case study told how he used his imagination to become a character within the story: "I enjoy picturing the image in my head—pretending that you are actually inside the book. Like, you are the character, and this is like your parallel world. (Male student 1, School C)

Another student, when describing her passion for reading, concurred with Harrison's (2004) recollections of successful readers reading under-cover in bed and risking chastisement from parents. "Yeah, every night [I read]. Once I get home from school, usually. When I am supposed to be in bed, I turn my light on and read for ages." (Female student 1, School A)

These two students, similar to other students interviewed, give further authenticity to the conclusions of Harrison (2004) who suggests that the most basic facet in learning to read is not about skills, but is about behaving like a reader. In the case study schools, the competent readers were excited or concerned about what happens to the characters in stories and found quiet places to become engrossed in a book.

Several students said that reading is an essential skill, needed in everyday life. "If you can't read, you can't do anything ... it is important because reading helps you with most stuff in life, like writing." (Male student 1, School B)

I think it is quite important in life for you to read these things because it gives you time to learn what different words mean and how they are working in life, and it is quite good for your job as well later on in life because, say, if you were a writer you would have to understand most words. (Male student 1, School C)

Some children commented that improving their vocabulary knowledge would assist their reading and learning for life. "I think it is good because you learn new words and it helps you with your spelling as well" (Female student 1, School A). "It helps you with your everyday life. Like, in tests the vocabulary gets bigger and you get more words in your brain that you can use" (Female student 2, School A).

Children who have larger vocabulary knowledge tend to be better at comprehending, but not necessarily because of their vocabulary knowledge. Rather, as, Pressley, Disney and

Anderson (2006) posit, it may be because the combination of a good vocabulary knowledge and strong comprehension indicate general intelligence.

Not all children in the five case study schools enjoyed reading overall, but they did find some aspects of the reading programme helpful.

I probably spend the least time I can with reading because I don't like it that much, but probably we spend about five minutes after lunch and morning tea reading, and then maybe half an hour with our actual reading with Mrs C. That book stuff is quite good ... like the activities, because it helps us think, and we actually get the plot of the book and stuff. (Male student 2, School B)

And some did not view reading as a priority in relation to their other leisure pursuits. "I don't really read a lot because I do a lot of sport outside of school. So I don't have a lot of time at home" (Male student 3, School B).

Overall, the children's comments showed they considered learning to read important, especially in terms of developing word vocabulary and comprehension. However, not all of the children viewed reading as pleasurable. Lockwood (2008) alerts us to the growing evidence from several British studies that the majority of children no longer enjoy reading. This may also be caused by the competing forces of screen-time in today's information communication technology-rich environment.

Motivation and encouragement

Better readers tend to be those who read more because they are motivated by their success, which in turn improves their vocabulary and comprehension. The inverse applies to underachieving readers (Stanovich, 1986). According to the children in the five case study schools, school-wide strategies, teachers and parents and other family members were the main sources of motivation to read.

The five schools had various strategies in place to improve reading achievement. For example, School A had a 'boys-only class'. The boys in that class had reportedly become much more positive about schooling and were making gains in reading. Their male teacher had a passion for young adult fiction, was undertaking post-graduate study in children's literature and had a classroom environment rich in literature. The three boys interviewed from this class said they preferred being in this class, and they shared their enthusiasm for

reading: “You get really enthusiastic about them (books) as well. You are just always encouraged to read all of the time” (Male student 1, boys only class, School A). “No, I don’t know anyone from our class [who is not enthusiastic about reading]. Everyone is really, really enthusiastic about it, but they all are happier to read than they were at the start of the year” (Male student 2, boys only class, School A).

At this school, the ‘boys-only’ class appeared to be making positive achievement gains across all areas of the curriculum for these children. However, as Skelton, Carrington, Francis, Hutchings, Read, and Hall (2009) point out, the ‘boys’ underachievement debate’ assumes that one set of strategies will solve this concern and implies that all boys are the same. In this case study school, the grouping of the boys together in a class may have influenced achievement but other factors such as the teacher’s attitude to and assumptions about the students (Henderson, 2008a), his personality and evident enjoyment of and approach to reading and learning could also have been equally influential (Lockwood, 2008).

In general, the comments from the children across the five schools indicated that they perceived their teacher as a person who helped and encouraged them to learn to read.

I get a lot of encouragement from [my teacher], because I have always been quite a weaker reader than most of the other people. This year she has been doing some special reading tests to help me with my understanding of it ... comprehension. It is working really well. I do one every month. (Female student 1, School D)

“She [my teacher] is giving me extra help,” (Female student 2, School E).

By drawing on their expert knowledge of learning to read, through encouragement and enthusiasm (often evident in modelling the joy of reading) teachers play a vital and usually central role in helping children become good readers (Harrison, 2004).

Influence of parents and other family members

After their teachers, parents were the people the children identified as most influential on their learning to read.

My mum and dad have been encouraging me more than every other year now because I have got more enthusiastic about the reading. (Male student 3, boys only class, School A)

My dad and my brother probably because they ... if I ask to watch TV they say, “Why don’t you read your book instead.” (Female student 3, School C)

Yeah, sometimes after I have read a book, Mum asks me what it was about and what I liked about it and everything. (Female student 2, School A)

This finding concurs with previous research on Asian students who described their parents as influential in supporting their reading achievement (Fletcher & Parkhill, 2007). Similar to my prior research with my colleagues (Parkhill, et al., 2005) that investigated Pasifika students in their final years of primary schooling who were achieving in reading, some children positioned their fathers as particularly influential in encouraging their reading.

My dad ... encourages me to read. (Male student 1, School C)

My dad ... every night before we go to bed, he makes sure that we have got a book to read, or if we are sitting out in the lounge, he says, "You have to turn the TV off and go and read in your bedroom." (Female student 1, School A)

Research studies that refer to 'parents' often only discuss the 'mother' (See, for example, Nichols, 2000; Nutbrown & Hannon, 2003) and frequently discuss parents' influence in relation to the early years of literacy development (Morgan, et al., 2009). This present chapter, along with my and colleagues prior research on Pasifika students (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006; Parkhill, et al., 2005; Taleni, et al., 2007), focuses on students who were in their final years of primary schooling. I found, in these studies, a strong connection, albeit not yet tested empirically, between fathers' encouragement and children's attitudes to reading.

Students' reactions to their parents' reading habits

It would seem that parents, even during their children's later years of primary schooling, can play an important role in shaping reading acquisition. Furthermore, how a child reacts to their parents' values and beliefs about reading was evident in this study. One boy explained:

When we are not at school and I get to read –I read for ages. I just sit down somewhere and just read...Most of my family love reading...Dad, Mum, we have already got loads of books that I read. (Male student 1, School B)

Two other students who enjoyed reading discussed their parents' reading habits. They said:

My mum, she quite likes reading herself, and she is trying to get me to read a wide range of books. (Female student 1, School E)

Dad likes reading ... Mum, she reads quite a bit. (Male student 2, School D)

Some children indicated that only one of their parents was a reader.

My mum she reads for like two hours every night. Dad is not really a reader... He doesn't read books usually. (Male student 1, School A)

My mum, she is not much of a reader, but my dad, he will go to bed early and just read in there for an hour. (Male student 1, School D)

One child said that even though his parents were not readers, he read for leisure.

My parents are a bit busy for reading really. Mum is looking after my brothers and dad's always working. But I usually read. (Male student 2, boys only class, School A)

The students were very aware of the reading habits and attitudes towards reading of their parents. This finding gives further advocacy to Stronmen and Mates' (2004) contention that while teachers can endeavour to motivate students to read, their work may be undermined if students do not see themselves as part of a wider community where reading is valued and is a significant recreational activity. Parents' attitudes towards reading, the home and community environments and home-school relationships all play a critical part in children's reading achievement and learning (Townsend, 2007). When children are in a family where reading is part of the daily routine and where they experience, from an early age, a bedtime story ritual, they view reading as part of their family culture (Strommen & Mates, 2004). Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital suggests that students who have values and attitudes that accord with those of their school are more likely to succeed than are children whose cultural dispositions differ. In this study, a similar alignment was evident among some of the children when they described their parents' reading habits.

Out of school access to books

The number of books in the home is a strong predictor of reading achievement across all societies (Elley, 1992; Yang-Hansen, Rosén, & Gustafsson, 2007). Libraries, within the school, in the children's homes, and in the communities, were well received and utilised to varying degrees by the children.

I get it mostly from the library, the town library or Mr W [my teacher]. (Male student 2, boys only class, School A)

I sometimes buy my books, because I like to have my own little library. I sometimes get them out from the library. (Male student 1, School A)

Buy them, school library—most of them are already part of our home. We have built in loads of shelves with loads of books. Most of my family love reading.
(Male student 1, School B)

Ready access to books from a variety of sources helped these children with their reading. The findings here are corroborated in Chapter Seven that investigated parents' views on the supports and challenges that they thought influenced their children's reading. Most parents, irrespective of their child's ability in reading, reported that they and their children accessed school and community libraries for reading material, though to varying extents.

Teachers' reading-related activities

Classroom management

What researchers find in their investigations needs to be contrasted with other research to uncover what is missing. For example, I found during one of my earlier studies with my colleagues, that Pasifika students who were underachieving in reading, said that noisy classrooms that lacked strong management from their teachers impeded their reading as did bullying from classmates about their literacy deficits (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006). The children in this present study, where reportedly effective reading instruction was occurring, mentioned none of these concerns. In their meta-analysis of 91 research syntheses and interviews with 61 educational researchers, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) identified classroom management as the top priority of 27 characteristics that impact on student learning.

Findings from the five case study schools suggested that these schools' classroom management approaches and whole school climates are conducive to a focus on learning because here the teachers and children are not constantly distracted by management issues. This observation is supported by the Education Review Office's (ERO) positive reports on all five schools' learning environments and on-task behaviour. For example, at School E, a low-decile, multicultural city school, ERO had this to say: "Students experience good quality to excellent teaching across the school. ERO observed very good levels of on-task learning in classrooms. Class programmes focus on improving reading and numeracy levels." (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/reppub.nsf/>)

Reading level

The children's comments about the texts their teacher gave them to read indicated their awareness that the acquisition of reading skills is a developmental process and that it was therefore appropriate for their teacher to present them with texts in a sequential and planned manner. This aligns with Vygotsky (1978) who suggests that children learn when they are supported by adults who provide scaffolds for their understandings to develop.

She tells us about a book that we would probably like and encourages us to read books that are at your level. (Female student 2, School D)

She might select books for us to read that are appropriate for our age or in our reading groups. (Male student 1, School A)

Guided reading group instruction

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2006) suggests that during guided reading, Years 5 to 8 students should silently read texts in sections but have opportunity for brief discussion between sections to improve comprehension and encourage critical thinking. The case study children indicated they liked this approach and described how their teacher involved them in debating and interpreting the intended meaning of the text. Paris (2009) identified this as beneficial to reading acquisition.

Our whole group reads it and, like, we get different opinions, because everybody in our group is different and it is quite good. (Male student 2, School B)

You have just got to learn to work together and read together and sometimes it is good to work with one of your friends in your reading group. (Male student 2, boys only class, School A)

All of the children in this study reported positively on the guided group reading time, and their comments indicated that they valued this group time with their teacher. One component of this time that they seemed to particularly value related to improving their vocabulary knowledge:

And sometimes with our reading group, she takes us for harder books, to expand our vocabulary. If we don't know a word, she will tell us what it means ... and we will have it in our minds for next time. (Male student 1, School C)

Activities that children complete after guided reading time often involve some form of questioning (McKeown, et al., 2009). In the case study schools, the activities the children

described were underpinned by cognitive strategies aimed at continuing the children's ongoing interactions with and comprehension of the text.

We read the book then it has questions about the story –like making a story web, character webs. (Male student 3, School B)

She gives us activities that we can do in a group or on our own, so that, even though she can't be with us all of the time ... we can learn more even when we are not with her. (Female student 1, School E)

During guided reading, there is co-construction of knowledge both about the content of the text itself and in relation to the skills required for effective reading. This knowledge is then transferred to other reading-related activities, such as independent reading (Cullen, 2002; McKeown, et al., 2009; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006).

The children's preferences during reading instruction

The three main parts of reading time that many of the children in the five case study school liked were learning new words, a range of different independent reading activities, and reading the instructional reading text. Guthrie and Humenick (2004) suggest, when discussing what motivates readers, that children demonstrate internal motivation when they can see the benefits that the reading activity confers on them as readers. The children's comments indicated that they saw learning new words as an interesting part of instructional reading.

I enjoy it all by myself as well because you learn things all of the time. It is really good because when you come to a word in a novel or something, and you don't know it, then you sort of remember, "Oh yeah, I figured out what the meanings are when I was in my reading group," so it helps you while you are reading a novel. (Female student 2, School A)

I also like the expanding my vocabulary for different words. For later on, when you, if the teacher asks you this word, you will probably know it because you have already expanded your vocabulary.' (Male student 1, School C)

Although research does not show a significant link between teaching vocabulary and improving comprehension (Pressley, 2002a), if the reading instruction is more than a brief description and makes meaningful connections to the child's knowledge base, comprehension can improve (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003). Being able to select a book and have some quality silent reading time was a preferred follow-up activity, particularly by the boys:

Silent reading. When you can read by yourself and choose whatever book, chapter book or picture book that you want. (Male student 3, boys only class, School A)

I like silent sustained reading [SSR], where we just sit down and have a quiet read for 20 minutes. (Male student 1, School D)

Lockwood (2008) emphasises the importance of providing independent quiet reading where children can select from a range of text types, including non-fiction and magazines, and where they can genuinely read for enjoyment rather than be required to write about what they read.

The children enjoyed a range of reading activities.

I also enjoy the cloze reading activities, which is when, you might have a paragraph, and some words are missed out, and you have to fill them in. That helps you learn the words as well. (Male student 1, School A)

Well, we do podcasting on our laptops and record a story out of the journal. We fix up the mistakes and add punctuation and sound effects and stuff to our stories to make them sound more exciting. (Female student 2, School D)

I like doing our activities. After we have read our stories we have to pick an activity out of the box to do about it. (Female student 3, School D)

I do like the activities ... Some of them are quite fun. They use your brain. (Male student 1, School B)

The opportunity for children to further engage with the text in ways that are meaningful allows them to build their understanding (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006). Most of the children were positive about what they read during instructional reading group time. The opportunity to engage with others motivated them to discuss the text.

I like reading in a group because it sort of gives you a different view that you usually couldn't get. (Female student 1, School E)

Talking with peers about a text allows multiple perspectives to be explored and connections to their own experiences including that of other texts to be critiqued, a process that enhances students' motivation to read and create meaning of text (Wilson & Laman, 2007).

The children's dislikes during reading instruction

There was only one part of reading for which the children expressed dislike, and this was worksheets as a follow-up activity after guided reading.

When you have already discussed a book and stuff, then you get a worksheet about it, it is kind of just like going over it ... it is just like going over the same thing again and again. (Female student 3, School C)

I don't like activities like going through the book and finding sentences that you have to find words out of and stuff like that. And ones that take heaps of time. (Male student 2, School B)

The children in Schools B and C were particularly vocal in this regard, possibly because worksheets were more widely used in these schools than in the other three. The children's comments again align with findings from my previous research, in which Pasifika and Asian upper primary school students expressed their dislike of completing worksheets as a mandatory follow-up to guided reading (Fletcher & Parkhill, 2007, 2008; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006; Fletcher, et al., 2005). Allington (2001) argues that teaching for comprehension often involves "useless" activities, such as worksheets with comprehension questions, graphic organisers and/or hidden word searches.

Assessment tools

The schools were using the national standardised reading assessments— Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2003a) and/or the Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR) (Elley, 2001). The teachers used the test scores to help them improve each child's reading achievement. They also shared each student's individual achievement with the student and his or her parents, and explained to them how the child's reading achievement aligned with the achievement of age-related peers nationally.

The children at Schools A and D the children said that finding out how they had achieved in these norm-referenced reading assessments was useful.

Everything you do will get shared. In tests, we mark it down ourselves [and] we tell Mr W. It goes on a big computer screen, and everyone knows what everyone got. (Male student 2, boys only class, School A)

We did this asTTle reading test, and we did this one where it goes into this database and you get it back, and our class is higher than the majority of New Zealand in reading. (Male student 2, School D)

We got an individual one, and then there was one that tallied the whole class. It had our average for everyone, and it showed our strengths and weaknesses. (Female student 2, School D)

However, at School B, the children did not like finding out their results:

I sort of think it is quite bad; because say I think I am doing really well at a subject and then I get the results—it might put me back or something. Because I am not feeling as good as I was about it. (Male student 2, School B)

The children overall were comfortable that their results were shared with their parents and found it helpful to know how their efforts in reading were tracking on the school-wide testing regimes. This may not have been the case if a child was continually receiving news that their achievement was not comparing well to their peers. The sharing of reading achievement results with the students and their parents may well have influenced their external motivation and self efficacy. As Guthrie and Humenick (2004) propose, students' motivation to read encompasses three dimensions: external motivation, such as awards and recognition of reading achievement; internal motivation, where readers seek the benefits that the reading activity confers on them; and self-efficacy, where readers believe they have the ability to read well.

Conclusions

The children in this study viewed learning to read, comprehend and develop word vocabulary as important, although not all enjoyed reading. School-wide literacy strategies, their teachers and their parents were all influential in motivating them to read. The children underlined the critical role their teachers played in supporting and encouraging their reading.

The important roles of teachers and parents in motivating 11- to 13-year-old students are evident in this study. This finding enriches the conclusions of other researchers. For example, Byrne (2007) contends that learning to read is a protracted business and a student's motivation during that time is a key ingredient. Also, Pressley (2002b) reminds us that students' motivation to read and learn is high when they begin their schooling, but it tends to continue only if they believe that they are successful.

Overall the students were positive about the different aspects of the instructional reading programmes in their classes. Opportunities to be involved in ongoing interactions with text in both group and independent activities that analyse, debate and discuss text, and make meaning out of multiple individual contributions, were viewed as important in helping them improve their reading achievement. The one independent activity the children did not like

was worksheets. The children's views about their assessment results being shared with them appeared to be school specific, possibly indicating that the manner in which the results were shared had influenced their views.

A key finding in this study is that the children perceived their fathers to be influential in encouraging and supporting their reading. This finding and that concerning worksheets concurs with my colleagues and my earlier research on Pasifika students where fathers were viewed as a instrumental in supporting children's (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006; Parkhill, et al., 2005) learning. The link between fathers and their children's attitudes to reading also aligned with findings reported in Chapter Seven, where mothers of some children, namely boys, who were underachieving in reading, indicated that the father's lack of interest in reading could have a detrimental effect on their son's achievement in and attitude to reading.

A limitation of this study is that it relies on the views of children who were in schools that had been identified as teaching reading effectively. We can only speculate on the findings if I had also interviewed children who were in schools identified as not teaching reading effectively. However, my colleagues and my earlier research exploring the views of 37 Pasifika children from four schools, who were in Years 7 to 9, and who were not succeeding in reading according to their schools' standardised testing in reading, indicated a range of reasons. These included excessive classroom noise, ineffective classroom management, bullying by classmates, and lack of parental understanding and support for school-related activities which potentially inhibited their progress in reading and writing achievement. The students' perceptions received support from comments made by their parents and other stakeholders attending the community meetings convened to discuss the themes emerging from the children's comments (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, et al., 2006). Such issues did not arise in this present study where effective teaching and school-wide practices had been identified through the research advisory group, the overall standardised reading test results and validation by ERO of all five schools. An interesting finding from this study was the enthusiasm of the boys in the 'boys-only' class, which merits further research in respect of strategies that work for young adolescent students.

In this study there appears to be a strong causal link between effective whole-school practices, which are aligned with home and community practice and values, and children's

achievement in reading. As discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, schools need effective leaders who recognise the complex settings within a school and community and create practices where collaborative and democratic leadership exists (Day, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005). The findings of this present chapter on students' perceptions adds further credence to the notion that when the school environment is optimal, particularly in respect of student-teacher relationships, and when students receive support and encouragement at home, then their academic performance and, in particular their reading is advanced, as is their general wellbeing.

Although much research has been carried out to find out how to improve reading outcomes for children, the focus has often been on how teachers, principals, literacy professional development and intervention strategies have influenced reading development (See, for example, A. Davis, 2007a; Gillon, 2007; McNaughton, et al., 2007). This study has included the perceptions of the students and provides a different lens to filter our understandings of optimum environments to improve reading outcomes for 11- to 13-year-old students. Aligning with Carr (2000), I maintain that by listening to the voices of children, teachers, educators and parents can begin to understand how children view particular school realities. This is further reinforced by Wray and Medwell (2006), who argue that the perceptions of children are important and that such insights cannot be gained unless reflective practitioners, educators and researchers take much more into account children's views about literacy teaching. I contend that further research on supporting reading acquisition that includes the voices of students will allow educators to improve pedagogical practices and develop learning environments that motivate and encourage young adolescent students in their reading and learning. At the heart of the learning is the student, yet too often in research their voice has been silenced.

Chapter Nine focuses on the observations of the classroom teachers while they were teaching a group guided reading lesson. The types and frequency of the specific strategies the teachers implemented and the students' responses and interactions during the guided reading are analysed and discussed.

Chapter Nine

A snapshot of what is occurring in guided reading lessons for 11- to 13-year-old students

The focus of this chapter is to explore the frequency and types of instructional strategies Year 7 and 8 teachers in the case study schools used during a guided reading group lesson. As outlined in more detail in Chapter Four, the eight teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading by their principal. This chapter explores the teachers' perceptions of how they support young adolescent readers and investigates the frequency and types of interactions the students made during guided reading. This is the only chapter that specifically draws on the structured classroom observations. It also includes occasional cross-checking of the interview data.

My research responds to Rosenblatt's (2004) call for studies that investigate how teachers facilitate or lead during guided reading without dictating or dominating, and the opportunities that the reader has to respond and initiate discourse. Dennis, Lefsky and Allington (2009) explain how teaching adolescent students high-order thinking skills to comprehend text, such as, synthesis, analysis, application and inference requires students to develop their own questioning skills. This allows the students to negotiate their understandings of texts as they discuss content within texts with their peers. These authors described how in the U.S., higher order thinking skills are being tested as measures of accountability and advocated that utilising these practices may well lead to higher achievement outcomes for adolescent students. The relationships the teacher has with their students are crucial for productive and collaborative discussions to occur in a supportive but not teacher dominated manner (Soter, et al., 2008). Teachers need to provide opportunities for students to work together in groups and discuss and debate their differing understandings of texts (Cullen, 2002; McKeown, et al., 2009).

This thinking accorded with one of the aims of my case research study. – that of seeking out during a guided reading lesson the interactions of teachers with their students. Alongside this, I wanted to investigate the interactions of students with their teacher and one another.

Although there are many different forms of instructional reading, in New Zealand the central method of teaching reading is guided reading with small group instruction (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006). My aim was to more closely scrutinise what was occurring during guided reading lessons with 11- to 13-year-old students. The research question for this chapter was, “What role does the teacher take during guided reading and how do the students interact during guided reading?” I wanted to gain further insights to improve guided reading instruction not only within New Zealand classrooms, but also internationally.

Findings and discussion

In each of the eight classrooms, an observational survey was completed during one guided group reading lesson. The duration of the eight individual group lessons ranged from 16 minutes to 37 minutes, averaging 22 minutes across the eight individual group lessons observed. The teachers varied in the way they organised their weekly guided reading programmes. Some teachers preferred to take only two groups for guided reading a day for approximately 30 minutes per group, while other teachers took four or more groups per day.

During the guided reading group session, the other reading groups were involved in a range of independent activities such as writing alternative endings for the story, making and sharing podcasts on aspects of the reading text, silent reading, working on quiz sheets, completing character descriptions or researching for further information related to the text topic. Although these activities contribute to the wider reading programme and may well be part of the total package of raising reading achievement, the focus of this chapter was to closely examine the explicit interactions between the teacher and the students during a guided reading lesson. I wanted to find out what role the teacher took and how that impacted on the students’ interactions with their teacher and peers.

This chapter now looks at the explicit instructional teaching strategies that the teachers were implementing to support reading for these 11- to 13-year-old students during the guided reading lessons.

Part A: Strategies the teachers implemented

Questioning and using prompts

Figure 1 indicates the frequency of questions the teacher asked per minute during their guided group lesson. Seven teachers asked between 0.9 to 1.6 questions per minute but at School B, teacher 3 on average asked 2.5 questions per minute. From my perspective the rate and type of questions impacted on the amount of time the students had to reflect, respond and debate the text. For example, at School B, teacher 3's, fast-paced lesson appeared to bombard the students with more often 'closed' type questions allowing time only for short responses and frequently an individual response to a question rather than facilitating a dialogue amongst the students. For example, she could have used probing more often to search for greater depth and richness to the student responses. Her style of delivery did not allow time for the students to interact with each other to co-construct their understandings or contemplate different points of view. Because of these factors, her teaching strategies gave evidence of an authoritarian manner which disempowered the students in establishing student-led dialogue. Additionally, she did not use 'wait time' after asking a question if there was no immediate response from a student, but would rather give the answer herself. However, this was not prevalent as the students appeared conditioned to her rapid fire questioning techniques and were keen to give a quick response, in some ways mirroring her teaching style and manner.

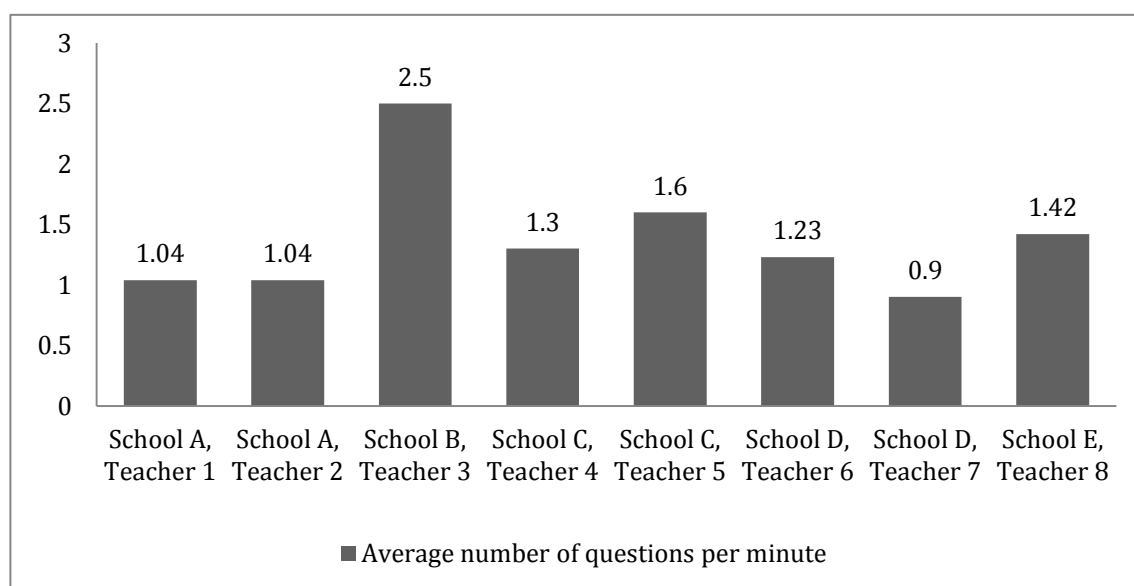


Figure 1. Frequency of questions per minute

The following are examples of rapid fire questions that School B, teacher 3 asked:

Why is he a bit scared of it?

He's approaching it – how?

She tended to ask 'closed' questions that allowed little time for critical reflection and discussion when she worked with this group.

In comparison, teacher 6 at School D, who had a frequency of 1.23 questions per minute, more frequently used 'open' questions that encouraged critical thinking and students to draw on prior knowledge and experiences. For example, they included:

If that was you and you were living in the world – how would it make you feel?

What are the contrasts / similarities compared with our life compared to the life of the giver?

The type of questioning influences students' reading growth (B. M. Taylor, et al., 2003) which in turn is influenced by the rate of teacher-led questioning. All of these teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading by their respective principals. However, the rate of teacher-led questioning by some of the teachers maintained the authoritarian control of the teacher and may have precluded student-led dialogue. This aligns with Galda and Beach (2004) who discussed the overuse of teacher-led questioning, particularly in upper primary and high school classes. If students are to develop and contribute to authentic talk about text, teachers can participate as co-inquirers and be tentative and honest in their discussions. For example, at School A, teacher 2 when taking guided reading part way through the lesson said to the students as they tried to collaboratively make meaning from a text:

I have no idea where this book is going to take us.

This tentativeness on the teacher's part encouraged the students to respond and work as co-inquirers in making sense of the text and realise that they did not need to have a predetermined answer.

Some of the different strategies teachers had taught their students also influenced the opportunities for dialogic discourse. For example, at School D, teacher 6 used 'bounce a

fact’ where, with a partner, the students had to share as many facts as possible about a specific passage of text. For example, she said:

Read the next page and find out as many facts as you can... Okay, tell as many facts as you can remember to your partner. [The teacher also shared fact-finding with a partner]

What makes it easier to remember when you bounce facts off each other?

At School C, teacher 4, who had the highest counts of student responses for students answering ‘open’ questions (92), often had several students responding to her questions without her directing them. She had taught her students that when she asked a question during instructional group reading that she expected all students in the group to give a response without her individually asking each to respond, or only expecting one student to respond to each question she asked. The teaching of this strategy was allowing a more natural dialogue to occur amongst the students (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Wilkinson, 2010).

Table 4 shows the frequency of teacher prompts. All of the teachers predominantly used teacher-led questions to promote discussion, frequently followed up with prompts or probes to elicit more information. The types of prompts the teachers used often encouraged the students to make links to their own personal experiences and prior knowledge. At other times the prompts encouraged the students to follow up on an issue in the story in more depth. For example, at School C teacher 4 probed for further information about the key character in a text about a ‘bag lady’ (a lady living on the street with a bag to keep all her worldly belongings).

There is a lot of evidence that she is old and tired – use pencil to circle text that tells us she is old and tired.

Saggy, bleary-eyed are all examples of?

Read on and keep thinking about the language used – keep thinking about her life.

What more do we know about this lady?

Does it tell us specifically?

Table 4
Frequency of teacher prompting per 10 minutes

Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Prompting Frequency per 10 minutes	8.75	1.81	3.75	2.06	5.94	4.11	7.27	8.18

The frequency rate of using the strategy of prompting ranged from 1.81 to 8.75, with a median range of 4.11 to 5.94 per ten minutes.

Modeling

Modeling by teachers helps students make connections between the known and the new. For example, the teacher might model processes that effective readers use when breaking an unknown word into chunks to decode the word. When working with the students, the teacher not only models the use of a strategy but verbalizes their reasoning and thinking as they model the strategy (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuler, 2004).

Table 5 indicates the frequency of teacher modeling per 10 minutes.

Table 5
Frequency of teacher modeling per 10 minutes

Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Modeling Frequency per 10 minutes	.83	.0	.0	1.03	.26	.0	.0	.59

During the observed guided reading lessons there was little or no evidence of teacher modeling with the incidents of this occurring across the eight lessons ranging from 0 to 1.3 of frequency per ten minutes. In some of the guided group reading lessons observed, the teachers used an aide-memoir of planned questioning prior to teaching. For example, two teachers explained how they used yellow ‘post-its’ to mark places in the guided reading text where specific questions or points would be discussed during the guided group lesson. They said:

‘Always prepare. I have always got to go through the text and pull out the aspects I really want them to focus on... I always have my sticky things all over my book.’
(School C, Teacher 5)

‘[I use] the little yellow stickies ... for my teaching points.’ (School E, Teacher 8)

When teachers plan and prepare for their reading lesson they are able to more easily focus on the teaching points that meet the learning intentions for the group.

Telling and explaining

Telling involves supplying a student with information and can be the most effective way when a student does not have the background knowledge or lacks confidence in their ability to finish a task (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006). Table 6 shows the number of occurrences of the teachers telling and explaining. Telling, supplying information to fill gaps or keep the momentum of the lesson had a frequency rate per ten minutes of .0 to 1.6 times during the guided group reading lessons. However, in contrast the frequency rate of using the strategy of explaining ranged from 1.08 to 11.37, with a median range of 5.9 to 7.5 per ten minutes. Explaining was used to clarify concepts in the text, further develop discussion on a point of interest by giving a more explicit explanation when some of the students in the group had indicated either verbally or using body language (such as a puzzled facial gesture) that they were struggling to comprehend.

Table 6
Frequency of telling and explaining per 10 minutes

Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Telling Frequency per 10 minutes	1.6	.45	1.25	.0	.54	.0	.0	0.3
Explaining Frequency per 10 minutes	7.5	3.63	10.0	11.37	1.08	11.17	5.9	3.6

From my observations explaining, rather than telling, was more frequently used by these eight teachers. The strategy was frequently used when following up on student answers thus encouraging dialogic interaction (Galda & Beach, 2004). For example, at School D, teacher 6 used the strategy of explaining to help students understand a concept after she had asked a question about breaking rules. She asked:

So what happens to them when they break rules?

She then went on to elaborate on the concept of rule setting and boundaries in different cultures.

Teacher 3, who had a frequency of 2.5 questions per minute, also had a higher frequency of explaining of 10 per ten minutes, equating to a frequency of one per minute. She used the two strategies of explaining and questioning at a frequency of 3.5 times per minute, demonstrating the very teacher-directed and dominated discourse during her instructional reading lesson.

The overall low frequency of telling by all eight teachers may have been because these young adolescent students were cognisant of the expectations of readers during guided group reading and there was less need for direct teacher support in such an environment.

The teacher's role overall during the guided reading lesson

Figure 2 depicts the total number of teacher-led strategies each teacher averaged per minute over the duration of their guided reading lesson. Teacher 2, at School A averaged the lowest, with 2.18 teacher-led strategies per minute. He had recently completed postgraduate studies in children's literature which arguably may have extended his repertoire of pedagogical knowledge and theoretical understanding to inform his practice when discussing texts and encouraging dialogue. The remaining teachers instigated teacher-led strategies between 3.2 to 4.18 times per minute.

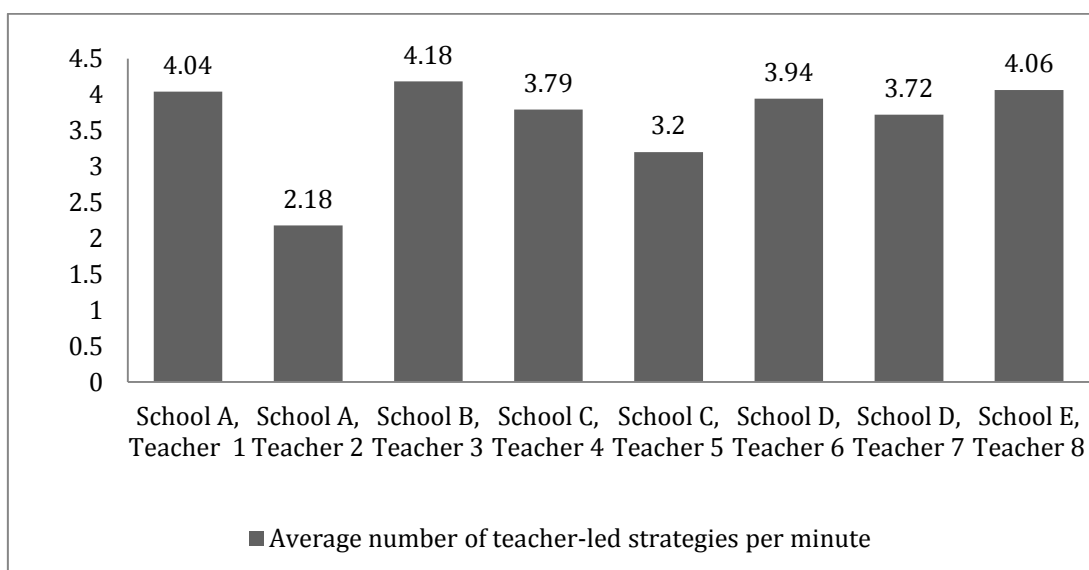


Figure 2. Frequency of teacher led strategies per minute

Guided reading lessons, by the very nature of the term 'guided', indicate a degree of teacher direction. Nevertheless, it is questionable if a teacher is allowing students time to act together to debate text and foster divergent ideas (Wilkinson, 2010) when a teacher is instigating a teacher-led strategy approximately every 15 seconds. This was the case with the six teachers averaging between 3.72 to 4.18 strategies per minute.

Teacher 2, at School A with the lowest average of teacher-led strategies, in line with Ruddell and Unrau (2004a), had beliefs that were founded on the principle that to motivate and engage students, the students should take an active and respected role in the reading lesson. This teacher was the only one of the eight teachers who had engaged in postgraduate study specifically in literacy education. He explained that he had been undertaking a postgraduate qualification in children's literature and how the lecturer's comments had influenced his teaching. He said:

It is that transactional approach, that Andrew (the lecturer), has in the course work. As soon as I saw it I just thought 'that is incredible'... if the author has written this, then the kids have got just as much right to say what they think and it has got just as much value. Once the kids start realising what they say and what they think has value and is right for them, then it is quite powerful.

During his lesson the students were encouraged to think of responses and all answers were accepted. The types of questions and statements he made supported a positive interface between the teacher and the students. They included encouraging the development of a student's word-analysis skills, text processing strategies, and background knowledge of language (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a). For example:

Can you work out from the content what those words actually mean?

How do you know that?

Do you think an author would leave you hanging?

Did you see how I made a mistake?

What did I do?

Why didn't I just go on?

The teacher and the students collaboratively constructed meaning through a process of connections amongst the reader, the teacher and the text and the classroom context (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a). Although the other seven teachers discussed to a lesser degree their beliefs

about teaching reading comprehension, none were as explicit as Teacher 2, at School A, in articulating the need for the students' views and ideas to be accepted and valued.

Teacher 3, at School B, who had the highest frequency of teacher-led strategies per minute (4.18) discussed how the professional development in literacy at her school was encouraging students to lead their own learning in reading and the start she had made in that direction by allowing a group of students to select their own instructional reading text. She said:

I think if they are leading it and interested in it and even choosing what they read will make a big difference. What I did with a little group of them, my fluent readers, was I took them into our reading resource room the other day and I told them to have a look what was there. Then they started to pull out novels and things. Instead of me picking up the box in there - I told them they were going to chose what they read next. That will be around that leading their own reading programme.

This teacher was at an early stage of a learning continuum of student-led dialogue, supported by the wider school professional development. She was reflecting on ways to enhance her teaching practices by allowing students to take a greater part in 'leading their own learning in reading'. However, her teaching that I observed, with 4.18 teacher-led strategies in a minute, did not allow the students to lead their own learning. Furthermore, with this rate of teacher-led instructions the time students had to read extracts of text during the guided reading session may need to be reconsidered.

At the five case study schools, all eight teachers had been nominated by their principals as effective teachers of reading in the upper primary school. Also, one of the selection criteria for nominating the teacher included teachers who encourage rich discussion with and amongst the students. This could be facilitated by encouraging students to question and challenge their teacher and one another about the texts they are reading. Although this was only a case study research, it appeared that there may have been a lack of theoretical understanding by some of the principals of the strategies that effective teachers of reading should implement. This indicated that principals may have different understandings about what constitutes an effective teacher of reading. In many of the lessons observed the amount of teacher-led guidance appeared to restrict the opportunity for students to question and challenge their teacher and one another about text. However, as the teachers were asked by me if I could observe a guided reading lesson, they may have been more at ease facilitating a lesson that included explicit teacher-led teaching.

Part B: The students' interactions during the guided reading lesson

Student responses and interaction during guided reading group lesson

This chapter now looks at the student discourse during guided reading lessons. To understand the frequency and type of interactions made by the students during guided reading, the observational surveys were categorised by individual student responses in the following five categories: *answering* an 'open' question that may have involved strategies such as prediction, inference, summarizing, synthesizing; *answering* 'closed' questions; *asking* an 'open' question; *asking* a 'closed' question; and making a statement.

Over the eight lessons observed, the number and pattern of responses from students in each of the groups varied. Although each student made contributions to the dialogue, the frequency of responses ranged from students answering only one closed question in School A, teacher 1's lesson, compared to two other students in School C, teacher 5's lesson contributing 48 to 55 times. However, the size of the group and the length of the lesson undoubtedly influenced these results. For example, in School A, teacher 1's lesson there were 11 students in the group with a lesson duration of 24 minutes compared to School C teacher 5's lesson where there were six students and a lesson duration of 37 minutes.

Table 7 depicts the frequency of responses per ten minutes from students in the guided reading groups in the eight sessions observed. They are categorised as answering a teacher-led open question, answering a teacher-led closed question, the students asking an open question, the students asking a closed question and the students making a statement.

The most common type of response the students made across the eight teachers was responding to 'open' questions (278 occurrences) followed by responding to 'closed' questions (199 occurrences). However, when accounting for the students responses to 'open' or 'closed' questions in their specific reading group with each of the eight teachers, three groups had more closed question responses than open, indicating that these teachers were predominantly asking or prompting for closed responses. Closed questions can be useful to understand if a student is comprehending the more factual aspects of a text. My analyses show that in these classrooms it severely limited the promotion of debate and discussion.

Table 7
The frequency of student responses per 10 minutes

	Student answers open	Student answers closed	Student asks open	Student asks closed	Student makes statement
School A, Teacher 1	6.25	8.75	0	0	0
School A, Teacher 2	16.36	5.9	0	0.45	5.9
School B, Teacher 3	10.62	13.12	0	0	0
School C, Teacher 4	31.72	11.03	0	0	0.62
School C, Teacher 5	18.37	21.35	0	2.43	0.81
School D, Teacher 6	13.52	9.99	0.58	5.29	2.35
School D, Teacher 7	11.81	7.27	0	3.18	0
School E, Teacher 8	24.54	3.33	0	0	0

The total number of times all of the students in each group responded varied significantly across the lessons taken by the eight teachers. Responding to an ‘open’ question ranged in frequency each ten minutes from 6.25 times for the School A, teacher 1’s students, to 31.72 times for School C, teacher 4’s students. This was interesting as the length of the lessons were similar, 24 minutes and 29 minutes respectively. This difference in pattern confirmed my observations which showed that School A, teacher 1’s students engaged in lengthier, in-depth responses while School C, teacher 4’s students were totally engaged and the pace and interest in the discourse moved quickly, with often many students responding to a question or prompt from the teacher. Responding to closed questions varied in occurrences from School A, teacher 2’s students’ 5.9 responses to School C, teacher 5’s students’ 21.35 responses.

The overall pattern for School A, teacher 2’s students differed from the other teachers as it was the only lesson where the students initiated statements to such an extent, with 13 student initiated statements in total compared to 0 to 4 in the other lessons observed. This indicated that his style of teaching encouraged the students to take time and consider and reflect on issues. He facilitated a learning environment where the students would feel confident that their opinion mattered. For example he said, in interview:

Once they see that the teacher doesn't have all of the answers and that they have something to offer, I suppose they are not afraid to talk. They are talking to each other. They are critically looking at these books rather than just reading them for just reading them, so there is a different depth there and they are looking at links - the whole meta-fiction, the whole linking of stories within stories.

For the 'dialogic turn' to occur during reading comprehension instruction, multiple voices need to debate the text. Conley (2009) contended that there needs to be a shift from the authoritative discourse to one where students can interact with each other and consider their peers' view points. School A, teacher 2's sociocultural beliefs and values were influencing his instructional decision-making processes and resulting in a learning environment where there was joint meaning construction of text (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004c).

What was apparent in my study of the eight effective teachers was that they all had particular views on teaching of reading and comprehending texts. For example, teacher 3 at School B described, in interview, how she was encouraging critical thinking:

I am linking it [comprehension] so much into the narratives now. I am doing some really direct stuff around deconstructing a narrative and critical thinking around what makes this good.

Although teacher 3 at School B intentions were well directed in providing opportunities for critical thinking and deconstructing text, the practice observed during guided reading indicated that she had the highest average rate of teacher-led questions per minute (2.5), there were more closed questions, the students initiated no student-led questions or statements, and there was an average of 4.18 teacher-led strategies per minute. In this interaction between the teacher and students there appeared to be little opportunity for students to engage in critical thinking. There was a mismatch between her stated intentions and practice in this observation.

At School D, teacher 7 addressed the need to encourage the students to look more deeply into the text. She said:

I noticed that a lot of the answers to the questions are very brief and very text orientated, so it comes straight from what they have read rather than them looking deeper into what they can get out of it. So my questioning, particularly this term, has been around driving them to look deeper into the text and pull out bits and pieces and sort of helping them to be able to... I guess, sum up the story doing the same thing, so instead of just saying it was about dah, da, da, da, dah they can put

their own interpretation on it. Also, linking it to their own experiences and things like that.

The students in this teacher's reading group lesson of 22 minutes duration had a frequency per ten minutes of 11.81 responses to open questions and 7.27 to closed questions. They also asked 7 closed questions. The teacher's goal to look deeper at text was to some extent shown by the wider use of open questions during the reading lesson.

Some of the teachers, particularly teacher 2 and 7, recognised the need to participate as co-inquirers by encouraging students to ask questions and bring their own experiences, knowledge and beliefs to the discussion (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004c). For example, teacher 2 and 7 provoked discourse by comments such as:

I like the way you told me what you thought and how you got it out of the text as well.

What has sparked some questions in your head? (School D, Teacher 7)

I don't want you just reading these things but also interact with them. (School A, Teacher 2)

Galda and Beach (2004) argue that although research has confirmed the need for authentic talk about text to cultivate engaged readers, practice in classrooms has lagged. They claim that most teachers rely on repetitive patterns of teacher questions and student response. Overall, the data from this study reconfirms this repetitive pattern. It also demonstrates the importance of classroom observation as a cross-check to interview data.

Student-led dialogue

From the analyses of the observational surveys in the lessons by five of the teachers (School A, teacher 2; School C, teachers 4 and 5; School D, teachers 6 and 7) the students initiated dialogue in one or more of three ways: asking an open or closed question; or making a statement. However, the four lessons where this occurred to a greater degree were at School A, teacher 2; School C, teacher 5; and School D, teachers 6 and 7. The shift from authoritative-led discourse to one where there was student-led interaction with their peers to debate and consider differing view-points about text (Conley, 2009) was not evident in the overall analyses of the student and teacher interactions across the other four teachers guided reading lessons.

Although all eight teachers had been identified as effective teachers of reading by their principals, it appeared that during the one group lesson observed by each of the eight teachers that only one teacher was releasing responsibility – from where there is high-teacher control and low-student activity to one where there was low-teacher control and high-student activity (Pearson, 2009b; Raphael, Highfield, & Au, 2006). The teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading in Years 7 and 8 and the students overall were making gains in their reading achievement or positive achievement in comparison to school populations of similar types according to standardized test results in reading. However, the predominance of teacher-led strategies challenges the premise that these teachers were effective. On the other hand, it could be argued that it problematises the term ‘effective’ and what measures are used to assess effectiveness. If, as current literature (see, for example, Galda & Beach, 2004; Soter, et al., 2008) suggests, teachers should promote more student-led discourse – would this have further increased the student reading achievement in these case study schools? Or, does the type of teaching demonstrated by these eight teachers, better support students to achieve well in standardized tests, and arguably they are teaching to the test? These types of questions dig down to the underlying purpose of schooling. I contend that not only are educators wanting students to be successful and confident readers, but just as importantly they want students to develop critical thinking with thoughtful examination and discussion about text and how it relates to issues in society. For both of these outcomes to occur, I would argue that teachers should foster and encourage student-led discourse in the teaching of reading to young adolescent students, rather than be driven by standardized test results.

A limitation of the observations conducted in this study was that each teacher was only observed teaching one instructional reading group on one occasion. The duration and the number of observations are not sufficient to obtain stable estimates of the nature of instruction in the classes. Therefore, caution is needed when interpreting these results as the frequencies could have been influenced by the type of text, lesson content, topic issues or occasional circumstances. This limitation was imposed by cost. As discussed in Chapter Four, I align with Rowan and Correnti (2009) who argue that observations are costly and are restricted to just a minor number of well funded, large scale studies.

Nevertheless, the research uncovered findings, such as the importance of structured observational data along with interview data, as I have looked in-depth at these eight teachers

during an instructional group reading lesson. Further study would be needed where observations were conducted over several instruction group reading lessons over a period of time.

Conclusions

Despite being selected by their principals as effective teachers of reading most of the teachers did not employ research based strategies that allow students to engage in student-led dialogue. The teachers demonstrated strongly differentiated pedagogies that set up instructional patterns of initiation and response. For example, the frequency rate of teacher initiated open and closed questions varied considerably. Even though there were these differences, the teachers predominantly used teacher-led questions. Perhaps this can be expected when the researcher had asked to observe a guided reading lesson where there is an expectation that the teachers are guiding and leading the discourse. Notwithstanding this expectation, the degree of opportunity for the students to participate and/or initiate dialogue was limited by the tendency for many of these teachers to dominate the discourse. I contend that the principals were not necessarily able to identify effective teachers of reading. I would suggest that some of these principals may have not observed their teachers taking reading but rather based their nomination of these teachers as effective in teaching reading on the teacher's ability to articulate effective practice.

The individual student-rate of responses during the lessons varied but substantially evident was the overall high rate of responses from the students in each of the groups which indicated that overall the students were actively engaged in the lessons. Although the teachers used strategic questioning and the students listened to the views of others, student-led dialogue was not evident in four of the teachers' guided reading lessons and was on an early continuum of development in the other four teachers' lessons.

The findings, though particular to these case study schools, suggest that teachers of 11- to 13-year-old students should consider limiting the number of times they instigate teacher-led instructional strategies during a guided reading lesson and understand the impact this has on the relationships. Although, overall the 11- to 13-year-old students were improving in their reading irrespective of the tendency for teacher-led strategies, the sole measure of standardised test results in reading may not capture the students' ability to critically debate, discuss text and reflect on the opinions of others. I align with Langer's (2004) concern about

schooling. She contends that engaging in the kind of teamwork that is highly valued in industry and business, is sometimes seen as suspect in the classroom setting where individual achievement is still too frequently prized over the ability to work cooperatively in a team.

In the five case study schools where the teacher-led instructional strategies were happening at a rate of an average of once every 15 seconds, as was the case in six of the lessons observed, it is unlikely that an environment has been facilitated where students can question and challenge text. The critical activities of students reading text and developing student-led dialogue and debate with their peers in guided reading sessions appears to have been sidelined by most of these teachers. The exception to this, in particular, was teacher 2, who was the only teacher to have undertaken post graduate study in children's literature. Arguably, his theoretical understanding may have influenced his capacity to provoke, challenge and engage students in considered discourse. In doing this he provided the opportunity for his students to become confident and critical thinkers and ultimately competent members of society. I contend that there should be further research that explores the influence of postgraduate studies in literacy on improving the pedagogical practices in reading of the teachers of young adolescent students.

Finally, I suggest that this study underlines the enormous importance of using quantitative data to supplement qualitative research investigations. The extent to which some teachers (and everyone else) may give a false picture of their practice in interviews, even though their intent may well be positive, has been a significant finding in my research. I argue that despite the expense in cost and time, an element of classroom observation is essential in all qualitative studies of schooling.

Chapter Ten highlights the one very low decile multicultural school in this case study. The key factors that enabled this school to change from one where students were once underachieving, to one where students overall were improving in their reading achievement are discussed.

Section Three

Chapter Ten

A focus on the low decile, multicultural case study school

In order to better appreciate the conditions under which children are able to improve their reading during the final two years of primary schooling, I wanted to explore not only the explicit skills a competent reader needs at this school level, but also to take account of the wider school and community structures that support and enhance reading (Foster, 2005; San Antonio, 2008). The low decile, multicultural case study school, School E, was of particular interest in respect of this aim because by 2008 (the time of the data gathering for this thesis) it had made a dramatic turnaround from being a school whose leadership, teaching, student management and achievement were under review by the Education Review Office (ERO), to one that was making significant positive shifts in respect of all these matters in general and in student achievement in particular. Additionally, as four of my five case study schools were decile five to decile nine, I wanted to focus on the one low decile school that had been nominated as effective in teaching reading to 11- to 13-year-old students. Furthermore, School E (East Park) ¹⁰ had a higher proportion of Māori and Pasifika students than the other four case study schools.

As both Pasifika and Māori students are widely reported as underachieving in reading compared to other ethnicities (Alton-Lee, 2003; Crooks, et al., 2009; Flockton & Crooks, 2005; McNaughton, 2002; McNaughton, et al., 2004; Ministry of Education, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2007), I wanted to make a closer exploration of School E which was reportedly making a difference to raising the achievement in reading. This is particularly relevant in the New Zealand context. For example, Limbrick and Aikman (2005), advocated that teachers need a robust understanding of literacy development for the growing number of culturally and ethnically diverse learners in New Zealand classrooms.

¹⁰ Pseudonyms are used for the school and staff.

The framework also allowed me to consider a special interest born of Foster's (2005) and Heck and Hallinger's (1999) challenge to researchers to explore how school leaders and other school members build and maintain successful school learning environments. This interest was the influence of the school's leadership on the various layers of personnel associated with the school.

Given that my interest in this study was to identify and examine the interrelating factors that influence the reading achievement of 11- to 13-year-old students, I was intent in framing my study where the learner is viewed within wider socially situated contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1996; Cole, 1996). As Cullen (2002) points out, students are best able to construct meaning within socially constructed interactions that offer them experiences that have authenticity and meaning for them.

According to Denscombe (2002, 2003), research directed at documenting *why* a school, such as the one that features in this chapter, develops a professional development programme to change its culture to one likely to improve student achievement, and *why* it succeeds or fails in achieving this goal, can help us understand the interacting forces of a school-based phenomenon, such as the attainment of reading literacy. This thinking accorded with the over-arching aim of my case research study – that of seeking out the systemic cultural factors associated with the case study school's success in raising the reading literacy achievement of its students. It was hoped that this chapter on the low decile, multicultural case study school would not only tell the story of *what* had happened and draw out the core elements of the phenomenon, but also allow us to find out *why* the school was now succeeding in improving reading outcomes.

Findings and discussion

Background of the school prior to the commencement of the study

Four years before I commenced my study, East Park School roll had been 264. Two years later, the number of students enrolled had dropped to 149. The drop was partly caused by parents deciding to send their children to other schools in the area, a decision that may have been due to dissatisfaction with the teaching quality at the school. The poor quality was signaled by the fact that ERO had conducted reviews of the school in 2003, 2004, and 2005,

even though ERO typically reviews a school only once every three years. The authors of the 2005 review echoed the commentary of the earlier two reports:

The 2004 ERO Supplementary Review report on [East Park] Intermediate school followed an Education Review report confirmed in October 2003, where significant concerns had been identified. The 2004 report noted:

... [T]he need to improve the quality of curriculum planning and assessment, monitoring and self review, Māori student achievement ... Since term 1 2004, a commissioner¹¹ has taken responsibility for the governance of the school ... Challenging targets have been set by the commissioner in an attempt to lift student achievement in the areas of literacy and numeracy but there are no clear action plans in place to provide any assurance such targets will be achieved ... Serious concerns still exist at the school... The ERO report of 2003 raised the issue of variable teaching quality. The 2004 ERO report acknowledged changes but was unable to affirm that sustainable progress had been made to improve the achievement of students. (<http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/reppub.nsf/>)

The 2005 review identified some areas of improvement but the future action was to review the school again in 2006. Towards the end of 2005, the principal resigned and the Ministry of Education appointed a temporary principal.

In 2007, Robert was appointed to the principalship of this intermediate school. Before his appointment, he had been the deputy principal of a large city-based multicultural secondary school in the same low socio-economic area as East Park School. At this school, he had held leadership responsibility for supporting Pasifika students and had taken a lead in supporting a school-wide literacy professional development programme that had been effective in raising the overall literacy achievement of the school's students. Robert was thus well positioned, as principal of, East Park School to use this experience in his new school. For many years, commentators have advocated that school leaders need to be at the centre of school development programmes. In particular, they need to be more involved in the fundamental issues of curriculum and pedagogy, to ensure that any changes made are those most likely to improve learning outcomes, including those relating to reading literacy, for all students (see, for example, Stewart & Prebble, 1993).

¹¹ The commissioner replaced the school's board of trustees. All New Zealand schools are run by these community-elected boards.

Quantitative data

The STAR norm-referenced reading data provided by the principal revealed that, during 2008 and 2009, there were positive shifts overall in students' reading achievement, particularly among the 2008 Year 7 students, and even more so for that cohort during their second year in the intermediate school as Year 8 students in 2009.

Figure 3 shows the improvement overall of Year 7 students who started at School E in 2008. Of the 70 students who started in 2008, 67 were still attending the school at the end of 2009. In February 2008, only 16 per cent scored Stanine 5, but by the end of this group's two years at School E, 34 per cent had scored Stanine 5. Figure 3 also indicates the expected national distribution rate. By the end of 2009, the students in this very low socio-economic, multicultural school were, on average, achieving above the national average.

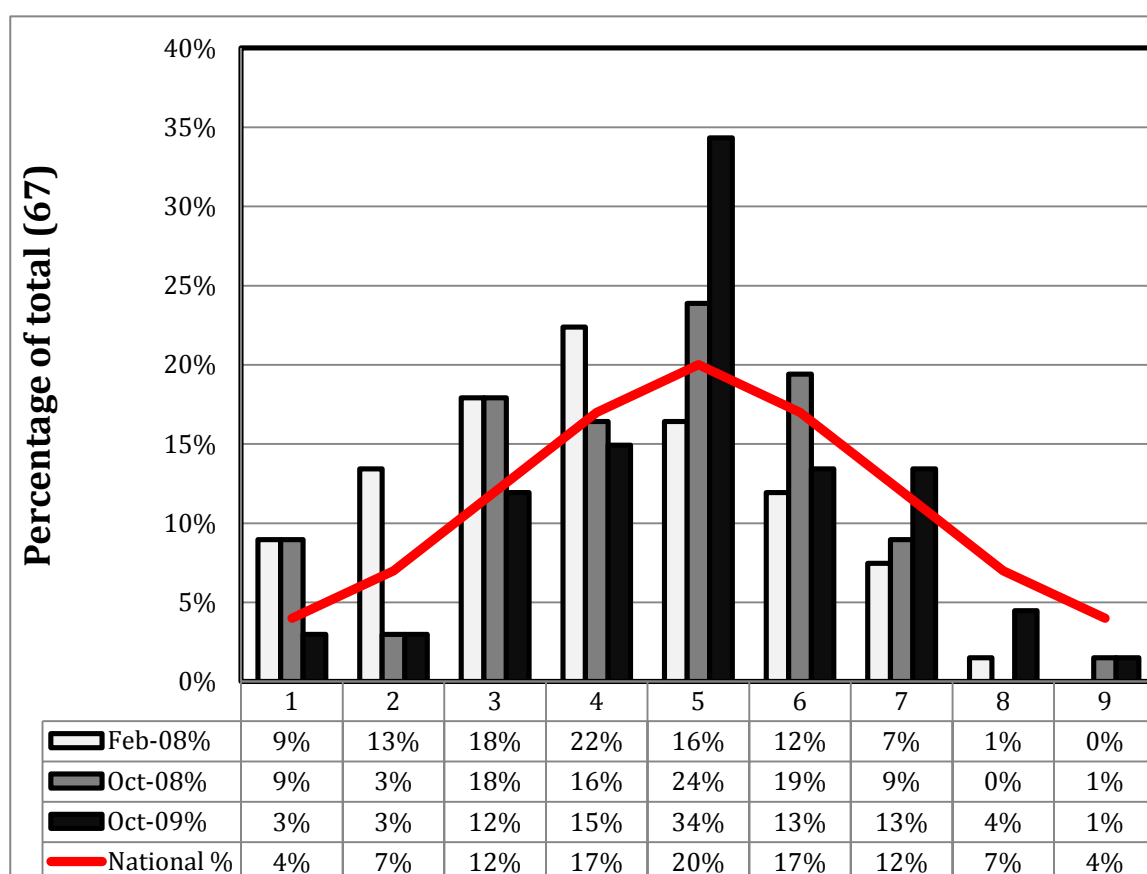


Figure 3. Change in STAR Stanine of all students who were at School E at the start of Y7 (2008) and were still there at the end of Y8 (2009)

The positive change in the school exemplified by the improvements in students' reading achievement was corroborated by the ERO report. It confirmed that school transformation

had occurred in respect of curriculum leadership, teaching and behaviour management (rated as “good”), and on-task learning throughout the school and class programmes, with efforts designed to improve student literacy rated as “very good”. The report noted that the principal was employing teachers and other adults so that the school could lower its teacher to student ratios in literacy (Ministry of Education, 2008). The 2008 review authors stated:

The board set student achievement targets in 2007 in reading, numeracy and the essential skills. The target set high expectations for improvement. The principal’s initial analysis of 2007 data suggests that most students made good levels of improvement ... Students experience good quality to excellent teaching across the school. ERO observed very good levels of on task learning in classrooms. Class programmes focus on improving reading and numeracy levels.
(<http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/reppub.nsf/>)

The report authors also noted that the principal was employing teachers and other adults so that the school could lower its teacher to student ratios in literacy. They concluded their report by saying that they would revisit the school as part of the normal three-year cycle, indicating ERO was satisfied that the school was now well on track to meet its targets.

According to Ogawa (1995), a change of leadership that produces a better “fit” between that leadership, the teaching staff, and the school’s community produces a climate of positivity for everyone associated with the school, with commensurate learning benefits for the students. This scenario appeared to be the case at East Park School. The ERO reviews and their authority to assess school performance had put in place strategies to improve outcomes. The impact of the interactions between the school and the wider education system resulted in changes in school leadership and a change in the direction of the school. The newly appointed principal articulated a connection with the Pasifika families in the community. In his prior role as deputy principal of a neighbouring secondary school he had established a positive rapport with this community and their children, gaining their respect as a person who was focused on improving outcomes for Pasifika peoples. This had been evident in my prior research with my colleagues within the cluster of schools within that community (Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, et al., 2009). For example, when discussing his prior role as deputy principal of the local secondary school he explained how he and his staff had worked to improve home and school relationships with the Pasifika families.

There are three waves. The first wave is to get the families and parents through the door of the school and to make them feel comfortable every time. We work amazingly hard. We ring up all the families. I think by now we must have contacted

all the Pasifika families in [our school cluster group]! We invited them all in, and I think we have had amazing success ... We had a marvellous night a week or so ago ... one of the five- or six-year-old children stole the show. The second wave is the part where teachers have conversations with parents about what has to be done for the learning. We know that the third wave is getting communication going between the home, the school and the student.

I contend that this principal's beliefs about making the Pasifika students and their families feel culturally located with his school was critical in helping to raise achievement.

When trying to understand what specifically had led to the positive changes in the students' overall reading outcomes, my analyses of the data found the following interacting factors as possible influences. I discuss each of these in more detail below.

- The appointment in October 2007 of the new principal who was culturally aware and also the appointment of an experienced teacher;
- The school's involvement in well-directed and resourced ongoing literacy professional development;
- The appointment of a part-time literacy leader;
- School-wide standardised assessment of reading being used to guide school planning and goal setting
- External funding to support these innovations;
- A move towards explicit teaching of reading skills,
- A lessening of behaviour problems; and
- Parents reporting being well informed about their children's reading achievement.

Factors appearing to influence improvement

Professional development

Professional development provides opportunities to foster, establish and sustain a learning community (Gavelek & Bresnahan, 2009). Commentators (see, for example, Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Timperley, et al., 2007) argue that any effort directed at staff improvements needs to have all staff committed to collaboratively developing a school-wide plan based on sound guiding principles. At the beginning of 2008, East Park School became part of a cluster-wide literacy professional development programme. At this time, the overall achievement of the school's students in reading and

writing was still at a very low level, and the teaching staff, most of whom were in their early years of teaching, needed support.

Together, the cluster schools, which were all in the same low socio-economic area of the city, used recently acquired Enhancing High Standards funding from the Ministry of Education to employ an external literacy consultant to lead whole-school professional development directed at raising students' reading and writing skills. The consultant worked collectively across all schools and individually in each school. At East Park School, this person's observations of the teachers in their classrooms, followed by his modelling of explicit methods of teaching with the students, promoted credibility.

It was quite good to have an outside person ... actually come in and see what the teachers were doing. Then to give some feedback and do some modelling ... He took six or seven Year 7 students and he had the Year 7 teachers sitting and watching ... He then repeated it with the Year 8 [students and teachers]. (Robert, Principal)

Timperley et al. (2007) suggest, on the basis of their best evidence synthesis of teacher professional learning and development, that observing an expert modelling specific teaching approaches during professional development helps teachers link theory to practice. The literacy consultant's work was supplemented by the school's part-time literacy leader, who monitored and supported teachers as the long-term professional development programme progressed.

I do want to become more involved ... and I am as the year is progressing ... I just see staff using Tim's [external literacy consultant] terminologies. I see staff up-skilling themselves. (Sally, Literacy leader)

It was clear from the commentary of everyone interviewed and from the observations that the whole-school professional development led by the external literacy consultant was helping the teachers, the literacy leader and the principal together develop new pedagogical content knowledge and a range of effective strategies. Reference to the best evidence synthesis by Timperley et al. (2007) is again relevant here. These commentators found that when principals participate in professional development with their staff, as Robert did, that outcomes for students tend to improve. East Park School's literacy development programme, under Robert's instigation, also included him and the teaching staff collaboratively interpreting assessment data to inform future planning and setting of school-wide goals.

It appeared that in this case study school, the professional development was succeeding because of the credibility and “hands-on” facilitation of the external consultant, the ongoing support of the school’s literacy leader, the innovative strategies the principal facilitated to support both the teachers and ultimately the students (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006).

Although, the school was making positive strides forward, the school leadership team realised there were still barriers to overcome. The leadership team were under no illusions as to the continual areas of concern that needed to be addressed in their very challenging school environment.

In some ways the school is doing really well, especially with goal setting and goal referral or targets, lesson objectives—that sort of thing. We do really, really well. But there are other things that we can look at. Management ... that is a biggy. And some children’s attitudes to reading; that is a big hurdle to overcome as well.
(Sally, Literacy leader)

Literacy leader

As Timperley et al. (2007) remind us, expertise should not be assumed of teachers who volunteer to be literacy leaders in their school; in many cases, variable expertise can hinder rather than help a school’s professional learning. Mindful of this concern, and knowing that East Park School did not have an existing teacher suitable to take on the role of literacy leader, the principal decided to appoint a part-time literacy leader to the school staff. “I looked at the school here ... and there was nobody ... so we advertised, and Sally came” (Robert, principal).

However, coming into a school as an outsider posed issues for the new appointee. Sally was cognisant of the need to develop a positive rapport with the teachers yet at the same time be accountable in her role of literacy leader.

One thing I do have to be very careful of is that because I am not full-time and I have come from a situation where I have been full-time, I don’t have that mana [respect], and I have got to be very, very careful that I don’t put pressure on staff. But at the same time, we are accountable for this professional development, and it has got to be done. So I have just got to walk along a line where I am not putting too much pressure on ... but at the same time, we have goals to meet. (Sally, Literacy leader)

An important part of Sally’s role was assisting the teachers with the results obtained from the standardised testing in reading. These were collated centrally on the school’s computer

management system so that the data could be analysed to inform staff of future directions and help them set teaching and learning goals.

Crucial to it is Sally, organising it all, and the charts. It is interesting that the staff on the surface appear to be able to do the data; but when you dig into it a little bit, there are a few staff members that are struggling with the collection of the data.
(Robert, Principal)

Because, as Gavelek and Bresnahan (2009) and Timperley et al. (2007) point out, assessment information helps teachers understand student learning needs, systems that ensure accuracy in the use of the assessment tools and interpretation of the data seem crucial.

Funding

The initiatives focused on raising literacy achievement that the principal instigated at School E came at a financial cost to the school. The principal was able to support this cost with funding from the Ministry of Education. The Enhanced Programme Funding of \$NZ45,000 per year began in 2007 for a period of two years (2007–2009). The principal said that without the Enhanced Programme Funding he would not have been able to employ the literacy leader or to employ relieving teachers to release the teachers for professional development. The other avenue of external funding was the Enhancing High Standards (EHSAS) funding which began in 2008 for the cluster of schools of which School E was a member of. The EHSAS funding was \$250,000 over four years from 2008 onwards. The cluster of low decile, multicultural schools used some of this funding to employ the external literacy consultant to work with their schools. This support not only highlights the crucial role of supplementary funding to school improvement programmes, but also illustrates how the national policy can influence the classroom conditions and outcomes for students.

Assessment

Using assessment tools to measure student achievement needs rarely changes student achievement outcomes unless teachers *collectively* believe they have the potential to have a positive impact on student achievement (Goddard et al., 2006; Timperley et al., 2007). The use of assessment data, in the context of the wider cluster of schools, allowed teachers at School E to identify student needs and target specific groups and individuals.

There had to be work done about the data to put in front of the staff, about the reading level of the students. As you have seen in our stats coming in, there are

significant numbers of them at that critical level of Stanines 1, 2 and 3. It is quite alarming, and we just can't ignore it. Being part of the ... cluster with our contributing schools...we have been sharing all the way across, and when we look at the data, it just leaps out at you. Those figures were horrendous. (Robert, Principal)

Anita, a Years 7 to 8 teacher, who had been appointed to East Park School before Robert came to the school, told us that she had previously worked at another intermediate school that had assessment strategies in place similar to the ones Robert instigated. She was therefore confident in how these could be used to guide explicit teaching and thus support learning:

I actually tested mine [the students in her class] at the beginning of the year because this was my first year here last year, so I did my own testing at the beginning of the year and then at the end of the year ... I found that they moved up two stanines. Because they didn't actually know how to look into a book, they would just read it and put it down, and maybe get a couple of questions about it, but that was all they had had. They had no-one to go over it with them.

Anita's prior experience thus strengthened her teaching at East Park School and enabled her to model effective practice to her teaching colleagues. Her descriptions of the support she gave colleagues and the comments of the recipients of that support made evident the importance of interaction between classroom teachers during any initiative focused on raising student achievement school-wide. In this way the individual classroom ecologies each led by a teacher, benefited when they clustered together to collaboratively explore mechanisms to improve student learning. Anita's expertise and leadership within these classroom ecologies strengthened teaching practices and ultimately student learning outcomes.

East Park School was also sharing assessment results with parents so that they could gain a clear understanding of how their child was progressing in reading.

The best part of this school is that they give you layman's terms – feedback. And they tell you exactly where your child is. I have got no hesitation with saying how brilliant they are at informing the parent (Parent)

In my wider study of five case study schools I found that parents expected to be given norm-referenced information about how their children were achieving in reading. At East Park School, providing precise information on individual children's reading achievement in relation to their peers nationally was a relatively new and, for the parents, welcome practice.

Teaching

For students, explicit teaching and collaboration with peers helps them develop new understandings (Vygotsky, 1978). Building on the school-wide professional development and/or their own previous experience, the teachers at East Park School were striving to remedy identified reading deficits by practising these principles. Anita, for example, said that the school had identified as a particular literacy-related need that of improving students' comprehension strategies: "It is the skills in reading that these guys don't know. It is their comprehension. It is deeper features. It is unpacking a story".

I observed the teaching methodology Anita was using to address this issue. During one of the lessons observed, Anita began by informing each reading group she was working with that she wanted them to use inference to unpack the story and language features. Throughout the lesson, she directed the children to silently read passages, after which she asked such questions as:

- Look at the illustrations. Who do you think George is?
- What does that mean?
- Why? Any ideas?
- What do you think the story might now be about?
- Is there a sentence that tells you that?
- What tells us that is happening in the story?

She actively encouraged the children to consider and discuss these questions as a group.

According to Paris (2009), repeated interactions between reader and text, between teacher and reader, and between the readers themselves in which the intended meaning of a text is debated and interpreted enhance comprehension (Paris, 2009). Anita's approach also aligned with advice offered by Pearson (2009a). He advises teachers to give their students a chance to construct and revise their current mental model of learning by beginning with general probes and then following these up with specific probes that invite the students to clarify and solidify their new learning and understandings.

Although teaching strategies had purportedly become more aligned with best practice theory at the case study school, there still appeared to be pockets of inappropriate teaching, as this parent explained.

I don't understand the logic behind making them stand up and read at someone. That is to me irrelevant ... But, quite frankly, all of the children that I have spoken to—Kim [her daughter] and all of her girlfriends—standing in a room and reading a book for half an hour or quarter of an hour is just mindless and is boring to them ... I think they need to focus more on what they are reading—how to spit it back and know that they understand it is what I am trying to say.

I suspected from my classroom observations and interviews with staff that this practice, assuming the parent was correct in reporting it, may have been implemented by a relief teacher or teacher aide who was not involved in the professional development. If this was the case, the incident underlines the need to include all staff, including itinerant teachers, in the school-wide professional development.

As part of its explicit teaching strategy, the school had developed and implemented an action plan designed to counter the widely reported dip in students' reading progress in the final years of primary schooling. This was done by targeting the most “at-risk” students, namely students achieving at Stanines 1 to 3.

Our less able readers, and we do have the bulk ... we are skewed on that side, the lower stanines, I think that we cater for them quite well with resources ... We have a room ... that is where our Stanine 1 and 2 children are ... the intervention takes place there. They have a huge amount of resources. (Sally, Literacy leader)

Students performing at Stanine 3 were also being withdrawn from their class and taught as a small group. The plan provided scope for teachers to match interventions to individual students' particular needs, backgrounds and world views, practice congruent with aforementioned socio-cultural models of effective learning. The needs of Pasifika and Māori students and transient students from other schools within the underperforming group came in for special consideration in this regard. The action plan was also very specific in terms of what the school would do to meet its targets, when each would be done by, who would be responsible and what resources were needed. This degree of specificity appeared to be aiding effective implementation and delivery of interventions.

Home backgrounds and behaviour

The connections and associations children have with their family and neighbourhood can exert a positive or negative pressure on their cognitive and emotional development, with deprived or non-existent relationships resulting in little advantage (Beveridge, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). My case study findings aligned with the findings of numerous other studies demonstrating that the home literacy environment influences children's literacy and learning (See, for example, Baker, 2003; Baker, et al., 1997; Baker, et al., 1998; F. Biddulph, et al., 2003; C. Wood, 2002; Wylie & Hodgen, 2007), and that multiple contexts influence children's learning and acquisition of reading skills (Weigel, et al., 2005).

The principal and school staff reported/stated that many of the students at School E Intermediate School came from challenging home backgrounds and had exhibited or were continuing to exhibit behaviour problems, even with support measures in place.

Behavioural problems, children with learning difficulties; there are lots and lots of teacher aides around the place. There are lots of interventions ... The bulk of our staff are very young—just getting through till three o'clock, keeping a lid on things until three o'clock, because some of our children are very difficult and come from homes that we just can't even imagine. But they are in our society. They are here. (Sally, Literacy leader)

They [the parents] are not home. A lot of the parents work really late. They [the students] are roaming around and will get home whenever, and other things are in their head. So this is the only time [they get for reading] if you actually count up those limits. ... They might only have that an hour a week. (Anita, Years 7 to 8 Teacher)

Anita went on to explain that she used her awareness of the home backgrounds of a number of the students to provide them with as much opportunity as she could for quality reading time. However, as noted earlier, despite such efforts on the part of the teachers, despite the school's improvement measures overall, and despite its success thus far in relation to those measures, it was evident that intersecting factors, such as home background and the number of relatively inexperienced teachers at the school, would probably continue to challenge the school's ability to reach its improvement targets.

It is important to note that the long hours worked by many of the parents at reportedly low hourly wage rates may in some cases impact on their ability and energy to spend time with their children, although this was not the case for all children at the case study school. My

interviews with teachers and parents provided a number of instances of teachers and parents working together to enhance the children's achievement and of home backgrounds supportive of the school's endeavours. One mother of an able reader said that she was happy with and supported the school's approach.

She [the daughter] comes home from school, and she gets down on the lounge floor with her homework, and she squats down there, and she ploughs her way through it ... I feel like whatever is happening is enough.

Conclusions

This spotlight on the case study of East Park School supports the utility of taking a whole-school approach when implementing strategies designed to improve students' reading achievement. East Park School made positive changes to its teaching and learning environment once measures were put in place to address the concerns about the school's learning environment that ERO expressed. These measures led to changes in the school's leadership. The state was able through the authority of ERO personnel to better position the school in terms of leadership and governance. This, as N. E. Davis (2008) contends, can exert a positive (or negative) flow-on effect into the classroom learning environment. Robert, the new principal, came with strong knowledge of the culture of the wider community, experience in supporting minority cultural students and experience in supporting school-wide professional development. Under his direction, the school developed and implemented a collaboratively determined action plan, including school-wide professional development for staff, to support and raise the overall literacy achievement of East Park School's students. The principal's awareness of the potential to work with the wider educational community and make wise use of Ministry supplementary funding allowed him to better position both the teachers and their students in developing a school-wide environment where literacy achievement could be enhanced. He used external agencies to support the school and aligned the schools with the district cluster of schools to employ a joint literacy consultant.

Although I have endeavoured to test these findings against current research literature, further study employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and across a broad range of schools is needed to determine the veracity and applicability of the following conclusions in respect of raising the reading achievement of underperforming students in underperforming schools. I accordingly call for further research into these key issues to uncover the "blank spots" of how school leaders and other staff foster and sustain in-school factors that raise

reading achievement and improve schooling (Foster, 2005; Heck & Hallinger, 1999). This should allow us to improve teacher education and advance practices and policies to enhance outcomes for all learners.

In summary, this research provides evidence that school leaders should endeavour to create a supportive and collaborative learning environment for all students and teachers. School-wide professional development is more effective when led by a person with expertise and credibility and when the principal is an active participant in the professional development. When assessment data are used school-wide to identify student needs, inform teaching strategies, track progress across the school and form the basis of the school-wide plan for improvement, reading outcomes are likely to be enhanced.

Reading programmes in the upper primary school are more effective when they are regular, sustained, and facilitated by teachers with strong pedagogical knowledge about reading. School leaders should endeavour to manage school-wide behavioural issues in a proactive and successful manner to ensure that learning can occur in optimum conditions. Home-school partnerships should be fostered and parents regularly and accurately informed of their child's progress in reading and learning in general. Effective teachers are those who have a sound pedagogical knowledge of reading development and are informed about effective instructional teaching approaches. And an external review process of school performance can play a critical role as a forcing mechanism for change.

I also contend that my research evidence and related extant literature suggests that principals can manipulate the interacting educational environment to better position the learning environment for students by being culturally aware and supportive. The external funding arising from the Ministry of Education allowed the school, under the leadership of the principal, to provide literacy expertise and teacher release time, with the ultimate aim of improving literacy learning. Additionally, the literacy experts were able to demonstrate how assessment tools could be used to inform teachers and principals of how to improve learning in their school rather than be viewed as performance and accountability measures by the state. Finally, I align with Bronfenbrenner (2005), who acknowledges the linkages and processes between the schools and the home as critical to the developing child. I consider, on the basis of my study and relevant research literature that more research and policy development needs to occur so that schools can receive the information, funding and

resources they need to better develop school-wide action plans directed at improving home–school relationships. This is especially so in respect of educating and supporting parents in the critical role they play in improving children’s reading outcomes.

Chapter Eleven discusses the role of motivation and how as students reach early adolescence, teachers play a critical role in developing a classroom environment which encourages students to engage in reading.

Chapter Eleven

Motivating students and improving attitudes to reading

The final chapter of findings for this thesis sets out to explore what motivates and engages young adolescent students in reading. The earlier chapters have explored the perceptions of the different stakeholders, such as the principals, literacy leaders, parents, students and teachers. The preceding chapter explored a low decile school in depth. This chapter seeks to explicate the array of strategies that teachers from a range of school types in New Zealand schools implemented to motivate the young adolescent students in their Year 7 and 8 classrooms. Here, I focus on my observations of the interactions between the teachers and their students within their wider classroom reading programme rather than on the structured observations of the guided reading lessons as in Chapter Nine. I was cognisant that the guided group reading lessons were only one aspect of a reading programme.

Learning to read and then improve and sustain reading skills involves a variety of interconnected elements (Byrne, 2007). These include students' attitudes to reading and motivation to read for enjoyment (M. Chamberlain, 2007b; Cremin, et al., 2009; Crooks, et al., 2009; Twist, et al., 2004; Twist, et al., 2007). As the authors cited indicate, in New Zealand, England and other countries, recent studies of reading achievement show that children in the middle and upper levels of primary schooling hold less positive attitudes than previously towards reading. Also, fewer children in this age bracket are reading for pleasure or as a leisure activity outside of school (see Chapter Three for further detail in this regard). Many of these commentators consider these developments alarming, not only because of links between the attitudes that children in these levels of the primary school hold towards reading and the scores they obtain on reading tests (M. Chamberlain, 2007b; Twist et al. 2007), but also because the amount of time that teachers spend teaching reading at these levels of the primary school tends to drop off (Brozo, 2005; Brozo & Flynt, 2007; McNaughton, et al., 2007; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

In recent years, the New Zealand Ministry of Education has provided extensive funding for teacher professional development in literacy in many schools. However, despite this investment, the 2008 National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) reading assessment of

Year 4 students (children eight to nine years of age) and Year 8 students (children 11 to 12 years of age) indicated little or no improvement statistically in reading achievement (Crooks, et al., 2009). In this chapter, I report on the strategies the Year 7 and 8 teachers in this study used in this regard and how they “negotiated” students away from what Byrne (2007) calls “points of discouragement” in reading mastery.

Findings and discussion

Across the five schools, the teachers were all doing the following to improve students’ attitudes to reading. They were reading aloud to the children as a means of promoting and facilitating discussion about texts. They were giving children opportunity to engage with and discuss texts in different situations, such as group and whole class. They were using various strategies to motivate the children in general and boys in particular to read. They were using various methods to promote long-term enjoyment of books. They were using different incentives to read, such as picture books and rewards and they were developing and trialling ways of making reading “safe” and fun.

Reading aloud to students and questioning

The informal ‘in situ’ classroom observations and interviews revealed that a popular and consistent part of the daily reading programme was for the teacher to read aloud to the whole class. The teachers had previously read the text to ensure they knew the storyline. They selected texts in which humour, suspense and/or the climax of the narrative were likely to capture the children’s imagination, and they used, when reading out aloud, intonation, expression and characterisation to make the characters come to life. They also asked the children questions to arouse further interest in the texts. Subsequent discussion with the children centred on predicting outcomes or unlocking the inferential meanings within the texts.

Previous research supports the notion that teachers can motivate interest in reading among students in the middle and upper levels of the primary school if they use the strategies just mentioned when reading aloud to their students. For example, in their study of literacy achievement among upper primary school students in New Zealand schools, Parkhill, Fletcher, and Fa’afoi (2005) noted that students advised that if a teacher wanted to interest them in a story, he or she needed to have the ability to make the story “come alive” by using intonation, voice characterisation and expression.

Allowing time in the class programme for the teacher to read aloud to the whole class is part of the expected class programme in New Zealand schools (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006). The PIRLS 2006 findings for New Zealand showed that the 10-year-old students who took part in the study were highly likely to be read aloud to by the teacher (Comparative Education Research Unit, 2007). Despite the apparent advantage for reading motivation and achievement of the teacher reading aloud, anecdotal reports from literacy experts, such as resource teachers of literacy, and from student teachers, plus observations of students on teaching placements, indicated that many teachers of students in the upper levels of the primary school do not regularly read aloud to their class. Of even greater concern is their reporting of the apparent lack of regular instructional reading programmes in place at this level of New Zealand primary schools. In a study of New Zealand teachers' reading programmes MacGibbon, et al. (2009), Years 7 and 8 teachers reported that they found it difficult to fit in regular instructional reading because of the need to cover all the areas of the curriculum and because of competing whole-school events.

In the case study schools, two of the teachers in particular, teachers 2 and 5, when engaging with guided reading groups, generated opportunities for the students to analyse, synthesise, infer and predict information in and around the text. For example, at School C, teacher 5, started the instructional group reading lesson with these questions:

- I want you to read page twelve, and when you have finished, turn the book upside down and start noting things?
- Think about the characters, the setting and a particular problem that might come up.
- Who are main characters in the story?
- Which parts in the story tell you she is fit?
- What is your understanding of “adventurous”?
- What’s the problem in the story?
- What is Mum’s character like?

This type of teacher-led questioning permitted problem solving and discussion amongst the students and their teacher. Allowing open acceptance of opinions and thoughts had the same effect. For example, during a session with a guided reading group, teacher 2 at School A used a text that he saw as more complex than the texts he had used previously. He told the

children that he was not sure where the story was going and sought their perspectives on the matter. He also asked the students questions of a kind that enabled them to make connections with prior learning and to have their personal and/or cultural knowledge and experiences valued.

- What does it tell you about the people and who they are?
- What does that tell you about the culture?
- What about the boy? What did he want?
- There's something that all three have that is really important. What stories do you know that has these? Tell the person next to you.
- What did you guys talk about?

The manner in which these two teachers questioned the students and commented on their responses guided the students toward discussing meaning in an environment where children felt comfortable to take risks and give deep and insightful responses. The following questions are typical of those these two teachers asked:

- If that was you, and you were living in that world, how would it make you feel?
- Take special note of what makes a good piece of writing. Why do you think he/she has used the language that is present?
- Do you think that the author would leave us hanging?

In using these types of approach, teachers position themselves as learners on a journey with fellow members of the reading community within their class, and in so doing provide their students with opportunity to work towards their level of, as Vygotsky (1978) would put it, potential development. Teachers and students become collaborative partners in making meaning from a range of text. Students' opinions are valued and recognised by the teacher and the learning community of readers. As Daniels (2001) points out, learning occurs when students are involved in shared activity, as they have the opportunity to discuss and question text and share their understandings of meaning. It was apparent to us that the strategies the teachers were using enabled their students not only to fully engage with text but also to build on their established knowledge and experiences, including prior learning of text types and writing styles that had taken place in the classroom.

Motivating reading, especially among boys

Strommen and Mates (2004) found that, in order to foster a love of reading among older primary school students, teachers need to ensure these children have ready access to numerous age- and interest-appropriate reading material. Also, Cremin, Mottram, Bearne and Goodwin (2008) in their analyses of questionnaire responses from 1200 UK teachers advocate that teachers need to be more familiar with a wider range of authors to be able to plan holistic and richly integrated work in literacy learning. However, in my study of the five case study schools it was evident from the interview and informal observation data that all eight teachers in this study were meeting these criteria for effective literacy learning. This was not surprising, given that each expressed and demonstrated a deep interest in motivating children to read, and given that each had a wide knowledge of children's literature.

One of the teachers' primary strategies was to draw on a range of texts that they considered the children would enjoy during reading contexts. They kept, for example, an eye out for students who had reached a point of discouragement in relation to their reading and countered it by making clear that different types of text, such as digital literacy sources and magazines, were valid and important vehicles for becoming an effective reader in today's society. These teachers were actively aware that when young people read for pleasure, literacy competence can be improved. This concurred with several commentators (M. Chamberlain, 2007b; Cremin, Mottram, et al., 2008; Cremin, et al., 2009; Strommen & Mates, 2004).

For all of the teachers, the pleasure that comes from reading was an important component of their "encouraging children to read" strategies. They therefore endeavoured to bring variety to their reading programmes not only by providing the children with a broad range of reading materials and genres but also by giving them opportunity to discuss and debate their understandings of these various texts in different learning contexts (e.g., small group, whole class). All eight teachers emphasised the importance of ensuring that all children felt safe to express their viewpoints.

A chapter book, I always read it with them. It is lots of discussion. (Teacher 7, School D)

I have worked really hard to build up our novel sets—good quality novel sets ... I do a lot of literature circle type stuff, where they get together and read up to a set

point, and then we will come together and discuss and analyse, and then we will move on from there. (Teacher 4, School C)

I read with them. Some of that story I do whole ... some of it I take them through bits of it ... I am not asking them to write anything for that because our reading programme is quite heavy and at some point of the day they have got to enjoy what they are hearing. (Teacher 8, School E)

At School A, one of the teachers described using links between visual language and text, along with opportunity to critically analyse the texts, to kindle enthusiasm for reading.

Last term we also looked at a lot of visual language because I thought that is the way in, to get them enthusiastic about reading, because they won't have thought about a lot of these things before ... [such as] Gary Crew's *The Watertower*—the links between the colour green and the repetition of circles and the repetition of the symbols. They have seen it, but they have not thought about how it impacts on it. All of a sudden, they start to think about things and bounce ideas off each other, and the conversation is starting ... They are talking to each other. They are critically looking at these books rather than just reading them. (Teacher 2, School A)

According to Cremin et al. (2009), this kind of open-ended opportunity to increase talk about text and foster spontaneous critical analysis of it allows “the subtle shift in the locus of control (p. 18)” from teacher to student that permits creation of a reading community in the classroom characterised by interaction, reciprocity and enjoyment.

Trying to encourage reluctant readers, particularly boys, to read a wider variety of texts was a particular area of concern for the teachers. Several of the teachers spoke about their efforts to encourage boys not only to engage or re-engage in reading but also to extend their range of reading materials. Aware that some of the boys in their classes had become discouraged about their reading, the teachers were endeavouring to support them negotiate their way through this stage. Some of the boys were avid readers of magazines, and the teachers were encouraging them to try other sources of reading. The teachers acknowledged that motivating boys to read various text types is a way of improving their reading skills.

It helps them to be reading a whole range of texts, not just what they enjoy. I have got some boys in my class who would just read BMX [a type of bicycle] magazines if they could. But for them, I have been trying to get them to read a BMX story or article ... exposing them to different texts. (Teacher 6, School D)

It is just finding variety and then hooking in those other more reluctant readers—who again, possibly boys—like all that non-fiction. So [I am] trying to get them hooked into fiction as well. (Teacher 3, School B)

Other boys, who were doing little in the way of reading, were being encouraged to read magazines as a means of re-engaging them with reading.

I know teachers have an issue with magazines, but I don't make that an issue. I don't care what they are reading, so long as they are reading something that they are enjoying and making some connection [with]. I sit and read with them too.
(Teacher 8, School E)

Hughes-Hassell and Rodge's (2007) study of the reading habits of 584 urban adolescents in the United States found that, for both males and females, magazines were the preferred choice of reading material, with top choices for males including music, sport and video games. Only 30 per cent of these students' leisure time was spent reading books. As the teacher at School E pointed out, when children read magazines, they *are* engaging with written material. However, teachers may need to monitor, through questioning, for example, how much of the time the children spend looking at the photos rather than reading the articles.

As discussed in earlier chapters, at School A, the principal decided to create a 'boys only' class, as she had noticed that some unsuccessful male readers who had been in a male teacher's class had made significant gains in their attitudes to learning and in their reading achievement. This teacher, who was passionate about children's literature and was undertaking a postgraduate course in children's literature, was invited to take over the 'boys only' class. From the very beginning of the year, he made reading a prominent part of the classroom programme. During whole-class lessons, he drew the boys' attention to sophisticated picture books and young adult fiction.

My personal belief is that I cannot get boys, and I don't mean just wanting to read, I really want to create a need to read, like a real enthusiasm, and I don't believe I can get them to do that through guided reading, so I don't start the year with that. I start the year absolutely saturating them with many picture books and books that I have really enjoyed. I just attack them with that. (Teacher 2 of 'boys only' class, School A)

In the interviews of students in this class they shared their perceptions of how their teacher had influenced their attitudes to reading. The following comments from two of the boys are typical.

You get really enthusiastic about them [books] as well. You are just always encouraged to read all of the time.

No, I don't know anyone from our class [who is not enthusiastic about reading]. Everyone is really, really enthusiastic about it ... they all are happier to read than they were at the start of the year.

My observations of teacher 2 and his classroom made apparent the success of his approach. The teacher had filled the room with children's literature, and displayed and stored the books in an attractive self-designed silver-painted bookcase cabinet, which the boys viewed as "cool". I observed the teacher reading a sophisticated picture book to the class. As he did so, he exhibited passion and a deep understanding of children's literature. He prompted the boys to compare and contrast the text with two picture books that he and they had read a few days previously. The boys were comfortable about questioning their teacher about the text and debating their thoughts and perceptions with him. The teacher, in turn, made clear the extent to which he valued their engagement, and in so doing, modelled the engagement he expected of the reading – and learning – community within the class.

Using picture books

Five teachers were using picture books to encourage and motivate their students to read.

I often read picture books and things like that quite regularly, and they may not even be at their level, but the kids love it. (Teacher 7, School D)

Reading to them also hooks them in. They love it if you can come up with a great picture book. (Teacher 4, School C)

The use of picture books, as described by the teachers in Schools A, C and D, and as observed in School A, appeared to be providing a powerful and effective way of arousing and maintaining the children's interest in reading. However, it was also evident that these books had to be selected with care if they were to be viewed positively by the children, and to capture their interest and imagination. The books needed to be sophisticated in terms of narrative, illustration and design, and to have storylines of high interest to children of this age.

During the reading of these books to the whole class, the teachers spent time exploring the visual images (pictures) and relating them to the text. Discussion ensued about how presenting the images in different ways might influence the reader's perceptions of the written story. The teachers encouraged the students to engage in critical, rather than specious, discussion, and to listen to what others were saying carefully and respectfully.

Certainly, the students at School A, during my observations, appeared confident that their opinions and critique of texts and illustrations were important, and of as much value as those of their peers and teacher.

With picture books you are looking not just at the text but also at what the illustrators have done, and once they actually find that, they can think; it opens up a lot of dialogue in the classroom. It is that transactional approach ... If the author has written this, then the kids have got just as much right to say what they think, and it [what they say] has got just as much value. Once the kids start realising what they say and what they think has value and is right for them, then it is quite powerful ... I don't want them just looking at picture books without them actually critically thinking about them. (Teacher 2, School A)

Again, socio-cultural learning theory aligns with this idea of learners working together in a forum where learning takes place through authentic, significant experiences and exchanges with others (Cullen, 2002). Some of the teachers in my study gave their students opportunity to interpret text and share their perspectives with their peers in collaborative explorations of intended meanings of text.

Promoting books

The teachers described how they fostered interest in books by providing opportunities likely to draw the children's attention to books that might interest them, and thus motivate them to read. One teacher not only used an innovative means (a book café) of promoting a wide variety of text types, but also made sure that the children themselves told one another about the books they had enjoyed and encouraged their classmates to read and discuss them. She considered peer influence a particularly potent means of motivating young adolescents to read.

We have done these things ... [in the spirit of] a book café. Every student promoted their favourite book last term. Because I had quite a few sets [of novels] in here, they all hooked into something they had read, and we shared that in small groups. They were able to choose who they wanted to share that with. (Teacher 5, School C)

In similar vein, another teacher described how she used the recommendations of other children to encourage her students to read a book instead of offering them what she considered to be appropriate texts.

If I say, "You need to read that in your personal time," they are not going to do it ... but if they own it, they come back and say, "I like that book. It was really great."

I gave one boy one by David Hill about a cricket team ... A boy actually recommended it to me so I could then recommend it by saying, "Well, Nigel said it was really good. How about you read that?" rather than me say it was great.
(Teacher 3, School B)

As noted earlier, the teachers in this study were actively aware of the critical role they played in supporting reluctant readers who had reached a potential point of discouragement in reading. They worked on a one-to-one basis with these children to help them find books that suited their interests and ability levels.

Kids, for example, like Sharon. She is a kid who doesn't like reading, and she doesn't think she is very good at it. She said to me, "I don't know what to read," so now, I am finding texts for her. I know she is a really good swimmer, so I have given her *Alex* by Tessa Duder, and she loves it. (Teacher 7, School D)

The teachers also made dedicated time in their class programmes to support individual children and guide book selections that might inspire or instil interest in reading for pleasure. Most also drew on the wider resources of the school, such as the library, to source reading material. The library at School A provided a particularly rich range of books. The teachers there were also appreciative of the fact that many of the children's parents supported reading by purchasing books for children to read at home. They saw this parental involvement as an important component of efforts to promote reading in general and book reading in particular.

I believe that we have got more of a wealth of books at our school library than they have got down at the community library, and I also have very proactive parents who are buying books for their children. (Teacher 1, School A)

This teacher was on the library committee and so able to monitor her students' borrowing habits. She targeted children with a low borrowing record.

One thing that we look at within the library, because I am on the library committee as well, is the borrowing history of children. We can print that off. I really target my children that have only had two books out or three books out for the term. They become my focus group, and I am selling [promoting] books to them in the school library. (Teacher 1, School A)

As part of the research, I asked the children in the teachers' classes for their perspectives on the teachers' approaches to reading. Most said they appreciated that their teachers helped and supported them to find reading material that fitted their interests and reading ability. As one girl at School C explained, "She [the teacher] gets us to read books that are at our level, because some people, they just read because they have to. She helps us kind of find books

that we can really get into”. Her comments align the assumption implicit in socio-cultural theory that students gain understanding through experiences that have authenticity and meaning for them (Cullen, 2002).

Providing rewards

In one of the case study schools, the teacher was using a reward system to encourage reading. She awarded the children with points for hours spent reading.

Each hour is worth 100 power points. If they get 500 power points, they get a dip in the box, and in there are chapter books and things like that, which is a good motivator for them ... [When] they reach a checkpoint of, say, twenty hours, I give them a question in their homework about what they have been reading and what they have got out of it, and what's the favourite part of what they have been reading so far. I also introduced that on hours, rather than pages, because I know from my own experiences at school [that] I wasn't a very fast reader, so things like that put me off because I could never achieve them because I was a slower reader than my sister, who would read a whole chapter book in two hours, and I would take two months! It is encouraging those kids who—I have got a few in my class—who are reluctant because they are slower. (Teacher 6, School D)

This teacher had drawn on her own experiences as a child to develop an incentive scheme that she hoped would be more equitable in terms of motivating all the children in her class to become more engaged in reading. From my observations, it appeared that this strategy was providing her and individual students with opportunities to develop conversations about text, but it was not clear how effective it was in motivating the children to read. Clarke, Timperley, and Hattie (2003) suggest that reward systems encourage ego attributes and children who strive for the reward rather than the pleasure of completing the task. The three authors refer to a variety of studies to show that brighter children are the children more likely to be rewarded in a classroom even though the teacher might believe the rewards are fairly distributed.

This teacher in the case study schools was the only one of the eight participating teachers who was using rewards as a method of encouraging her students to read. The fact that she was doing so and the others were not is worthy of discussion, given Neuman's (2003) call for researchers to look for what he calls “negative evidence” when analysing data (p.435). The “non- appearance of events” can, he says, offer valuable insights (p.435). It would appear from this research investigation that teachers who are effectively employing intrinsic means (e.g., enjoyment, interest) of advancing students' reading engagement and skills do

not see external rewards as a necessary motivator. If external motivation, such as that provided by the teacher from School D, can indeed help reluctant readers engage in reading and, from there, foster an ongoing interest in reading, then it surely has merit. It is evident from my study that, as a group, the teachers were using a variety of strategies, drawn not only from their formal knowledge of teaching and learning reading but also from their own experiences as a reader and their observations of learning to read, to encourage their students' reading. Ability to develop, reflect on, and modify strategies aimed at facilitating student learning has long been recognised as the mark of an effective teacher (see, for example, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005, 2006).

Making reading “safe” and fun

As I observed the teachers in the five case study schools, it became evident that each had created a learning environment relative to reading that the children felt comfortable in and enjoyed. In endeavouring to create a safe learning environment for the children, the teachers had striven, as discussed earlier, to demonstrate and model their belief that children are people who have a right to express their thoughts and ideas about a range of text types. In their desire to make reading fun, they had drawn on the children's interests and the lived realities of their worlds to introduce new and novel reading-related activities – to make reading ‘cool’. In School D, one of the teachers, mindful of the need to draw on the students' worlds, was using a range of digital technologies to entice the learners. As an independent reading activity, the children were using their laptops to develop individual podcasts of texts that they had either written or read. They were enhancing them with sound effects and music, and then sharing these with other class members.

Especially with doing podcasting with my kids and things like that, I feel that it has helped them heaps with their reading fluency and their reading to others, and they are more confident about how they sound when they read. (Teacher 6, School D)

The importance of ‘cool’ was evident in the commentary of several teachers. They observed that pressure on students from peers not to engage in activities deemed ‘not cool’ was a potential point of discouragement relative to reading. As one of the teachers from School A said, “It is that whole coolness [thing] ... You are not cool if you have a novel. ... It is a really big attitude thing.” At School E, one of the male students, speaking of the school library, said, “There aren't cool books there. Some are cool. But, they need more older, more interesting ones.” He went on to say that he preferred using the public library and enjoyed

reading on the internet. His comments aligned with those of the teachers, who all said that a school library has to have a range of books that appeals to young adolescents if the library is to be well utilised. Several teachers observed that involving students in selecting books that appeal to their age range can help overcome this issue. The male student's comment that he liked reading on internet suggests that internet access in a library can encourage young adolescents to see the library as part of today's world, where digital technologies are widely evident, and where 'digital literacies' have become increasingly important.

All of the teachers had developed their own strategies for making reading fun, and in so doing demonstrated how diverse approaches can be to enhancing students' attitudes towards and engagement in reading. The male teacher of the 'boys only' class in School A, for example, had reverted to using a strategy that he called 'gang reading' to engage his class. Here, the boys read together, so developing a reading community within which they shared ideas about the texts they were reading. The teacher had used this strategy earlier in the year with success, and then allowed the boys to read on their own. However, he found that the boys "were just reading them [their texts], not really thinking about them, so what I have found is they have gone back to gang reading ... because they are actually sharing what they see and the links between the texts." For these boys, collegiality was an important and enjoyable part of the reading experience.

Teacher 5 at School C said that she used "hooks" to make reading fun.

We did little fun things to start off with to hook them in. We just read and then wrote the main points down, then we looked at highlighting key words and summed it up. By the end of it, the kids not only could they write it, but they could verbalise it to me too. I could easily walk through the room after a sustained silent reading [SSR] session and say, "Right, sum up what you have just read."

This teacher again used the metaphor of hooks when she described the class's book café. "Every student promoted their favourite book ... They all hooked into something they had read, and we shared that in small groups."

Summary and conclusion

The teachers from the five New Zealand case study schools that participated in this study appeared to be motivating their 11- to 13-year-old students to read. Arguably, in doing so they were able to counter the internationally reported trend of reading levels dropping off in

the upper years of primary schooling. Although the schools were situated in different geographic regions, represented a range of SES groups and a mix of ethnicities, all were able to provide assessment evidence that their children were overall improving in reading or achieving above the levels of schools of comparative type. The descriptive data that I collected in my quest to gain understanding of how the teachers were doing this revealed that, as a group, they were using the strategies listed in Table 8.

Table 8
Strategies case study teachers used to motivate student reading

Strategy	Common to all classes	Specific to certain classes	Particularly successful strategy	Factors that seemed to contribute to success
Reading aloud to class	Yes		Yes	Using intonation, expression and voice characterisation Developing discussion about the text
Using picture books	Yes	Yes		Using sophisticated, young-adult picture books Exploring visual images in relative to the written text
Providing opportunities to analyse text	Yes		Yes	Having knowledge of text by pre-reading it and preparing questions and points of interest
Using a range of questions	Yes		Yes	Using questions that encourage inference and prediction and relating text back to students' experiences
Demonstrating a wide knowledge of children's literature	Yes		Yes	Having a genuine interest in young-adult fiction and having read a range of these texts
Promoting books	Yes		Yes	Providing opportunities for students to promote books to classroom peers
Working individually with reluctant readers	Yes		Yes	Knowing the reluctant reader's areas of interest, finding books relating to this and taking time to discuss choices individually with the student
Targeting students with low library borrowing record		Yes		Having ready access to data because of having a lead role in the school library
Using reward system		Yes		Using a point system that counted time spent reading
Creating a learning environment where students' views and understandings of texts respected by teacher and classmates	Yes		Yes	Developing a rapport with students where they feel their ideas and opinions about texts are valued and accepted by the teacher
Making reading fun	Yes		Yes	Developing strategies designed to make reading an activity that the students see as "cool"

While most of these strategies were being used by all eight teachers in the case study schools, several were being used by only one or two teachers. These included the use of sophisticated picture books, targeting students with low library borrowing records, and using a reward system.

Overall, the eight teachers reported utilising and developing strategies that they perceived best fitted the multiple (school and beyond) realities of the students in their classes. This is an approach that fits with the contention of Graves et al. (2007). These authors advocate that schools, teachers and their classrooms and the communities within those classrooms provide social contexts that affect what is or what is not learned. The teachers at the five case study schools were all committed to developing classroom environments in which the teacher and the children treated one another as respected members of the classroom reading community. In developing this environment, the teachers demonstrated to the children their own passion for reading and their wide knowledge of a range of children's literature. Similar to the findings of Cremin et al. (2009) in schools in England, once these young adolescents in New Zealand schools shared their reading lives with one another, they were able to develop a stronger classroom reading community. Viewed from the constructs of socio-cultural theory, the teachers in these case study schools facilitated a reading and learning environment where the children were guided to reach their level of potential development through collaboration with and amongst their peers during the wider reading programme. However, as outlined in Chapter Nine, the occurrences and arguably the opportunities for student-led discourse were minimal during the guided reading lessons observed. I suggest that if student-led discourse had been more evident during guided group reading, as it had been more readily evident during the informal 'in situ' observations of the wider reading programme, the reading outcomes for these 11- to 13-year-old students may have been even more positive.

Nevertheless, the teachers encouraged the children to be responsive and at ease when discussing either one-to-one or in whole-class or group sessions the merits of different authors or when exploring how plots, writing styles and illustrations might influence their interest in any one text. They provided opportunities for discussion and debate around a range of text types, albeit predominantly teacher directed. The teachers all promoted reading for pleasure and used children's literature to motivate and sustain positive attitudes to reading.

A critical element that underpinned the development of a positive reading culture in Years 7 and 8 classes of these schools was the respect that several of the teachers showed for each child's opinion on aspects pertaining to the discussion texts. On the other hand, when reflecting on the findings from the teacher observations reported in Chapter Nine, further opportunities for student-led debate and discourse during the guided reading sessions appeared to have been overlooked by many of these teachers. It appears/ it is clear that all teachers are on a continuum of reflecting upon and improving practices and strategies to best meet the needs of all learners. In this study of effective teachers of 11- to 13-year-old students there were several areas of sound and focused practices. This included understandings about teaching reading and motivating a love for reading. However, there were areas that could further strengthen the quality of the teaching of reading.

If all the teachers had been able, not only to articulate their theories of how to encourage dialogic discourse, but also 'walk the talk' as had the male teacher of the 'boys only' class from School A, then the depth and quality of discussions and debate surrounding text would have been further enhanced. Nevertheless, all the teachers openly valued the children's opinions and understandings, and in doing so instilled in the children confidence in and enjoyment of their reading ability.

The findings of this study have particular relevance for reflective classroom practitioners who are exploring strategies to improve their students' reading achievement. Accordingly, in conclusion, I offer seven propositions for fostering positive attitudes among students towards reading and, as a corollary, enhancing their reading skills. Initiating these seven propositions may alleviate the dip in reading achievement in the final years of primary schooling. However, I acknowledge that further research designed to explore potential points of discouragement in reading mastery during the final years of primary schooling is needed. So, too, is research on how students can be supported at these times. The findings of this research should further help educators understand the complex links between acquiring the skills of reading, such as phonological knowledge, vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension, and how these skills can be sustained as readers move towards their adolescent years where attitudes towards reading appear to become less positive and where reading achievement appears to decline.

The seven propositions that teachers should consider implementing are as follows:

- regularly read aloud both sophisticated picture books and a variety of other texts to foster a love for reading;
- provide opportunities for students to discuss and debate different types of text in order to develop a community of readers;
- through whole-class and group forums and on an individual basis, help students locate books that interest them and so motivate them to read;
- provide regular reading group instruction that involves explicit teaching using texts that engage the reader;
- ensure students have ready access to age-related, high-interest and ability-appropriate books in both the classroom and the school library;
- actively support individual students to help negotiate them away from potential points of discouragement along the pathway to reading mastery (Byrne, 2007);
- and be aware that because young adolescents may not consider reading a ‘cool’ activity, teachers need to initiate a range of strategies to make reading fun.

In Chapter Twelve I discuss my conceptual model of support in reading for year 7 and 8 students. I contend that supporting young adolescents’ reading involves interrelated groups of players who all have specific differentiated roles.

Chapter Twelve

A conceptual model of supporting reading

This chapter discusses the wider contexts that can support learning to read. It then outlines a conceptual model for supporting reading for 11- to 13-year-old students in New Zealand schools. At the heart of the model is the learning of young adolescent students. This study has shown that teachers and the schools they are situated within are only one part of the support network for 11- to 13-year-old students. I maintain that although this part is important, teachers solely cannot be either congratulated or blamed for the reading outcomes of students. Rather the responsibility is shared amongst those in leadership roles in schools, the parents, the local community, external agencies such as the ministry of education and the wider sociocultural community.

I contend that reading and support for learning to read are positioned in the wider context of society. As Gee (2004) argued from a sociocognitive perspective, viewing reading from the position of merely psycholinguistic processing of skills shows a narrow understanding of how reading is embodied in the social world. He concluded that “a broad perspective on reading is essential if we are to speak on issues of access and equity in schools” (p. 116). As I consider what supports reading development, I suggest that by understanding the wider systemic environments that surround learning to read, a ‘big picture’ view of the interrelationships and dynamic nature of these contexts allows us to comprehend reading development from a more holistic perspective.

I maintain that the reading development of 11- to 13-year-old students occurs within a variety of interrelated contexts. Initially a young child’s attitudes and motivation towards reading are strongly influenced by their home environment and their parents. This parental and home influence continues as the child enters and carries on through the education system (Wylie & Hodgen, 2007). During this time the teacher and the wider school environment also impact on the quality of support in reading development. The effectiveness of teachers’ interactions with students has frequently been a central focus (see, for example, research discussed in chapter two by: Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 2006; B.M. Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002; Wray, et al., 2000). However, the teachers and their quality of

teaching do not exist in a vacuum. What the teacher does cannot be viewed as the only factor influencing reading outcomes for learners. The classroom context in which teachers implement many of the formalised opportunities of learning to read, are part of the wider school context. Within this wider school context, others such as the literacy leader and teacher aides also have a role in working collaboratively with teachers to support the reading development of all students. Indeed, the principal also plays a critical part in the provision of a positive, supportive and focused team approach to supporting students' reading.

Alongside this, as students move through their schooling and are in the final two years of their primary education (Years 7 and 8) they are entering their early years of adolescence where often they are beginning to interact to a greater extent with the wider community. Leisure activities, such as sporting interests, pursuits in the arts and music, reading magazines and advertisements, texting, emailing, engaging in chat forums, posting and reading comments on social forums such as Facebook and Twitter, searching websites, church commitments, shopping and travel are all examples which provide opportunities to use and apply reading skills and strategies in today's world. Access to engage in many of these types of social interactions can be dependent on the family and home environment, but is also dependent on the wider social and cultural contexts where the young adolescent is situated. As Henderson (2008b) maintains, teachers who provide opportunities to connect literacy learning to the life-world of students make positive steps forward in building on students' strengths.

Without doubt education occurs in a political context (Valencia & Wixson, 2004). Policy decisions by the Ministry of Education frequently charge teachers and/or those in school leadership roles with being agents of educational change. When this change is mandated centrally, it requires resourcing and credibility. Gaining access to additional resourcing to implement change, whether the change is centrally or locally mandated, relies heavily on government and Ministry of Education initiatives. This is particularly the case in New Zealand for state schools and even more so for state schools situated in low socio-economic areas.

The challenge, when considering supporting 11- to 13-year-old students in reading development, is to unpack and explain how these differing and interacting wider systemic contexts work together in supporting reading development. Firstly, several key assumptions,

deriving from Ruddell and Unrau's (2004a) theoretical model of 'reading as a meaning construction', underlie my explanation of supporting reading for 11- to 13-year-old students. They are:

- Language and reading performance is directly related to the reader's environment.
- The driving force behind language performance and reading growth is the reader's ability to obtain meaning.
- Oral and written language development, which affect the thinking process, contribute directly to the development of reading ability.
- Readers construct meaning not only of printed manuscripts but also of events, speech and behaviors as they "read" gestures, images, symbols, signs and signals that are embedded in a social and cultural environment...
- Meanings for texts are dynamic, not static, as individuals, texts, and contexts change and interact.
- The role of the teacher is critical in negotiating and facilitating meaning in the text and the social context of the classroom (p. 1463).

My discussion will now be devoted to explaining the nature of a wider systemic conceptual model of supporting reading for 11- to 13-year-old students within the New Zealand education system. Nevertheless, what needs to be kept in mind is that certain features of any conceptual model on learning may be common within schools, but undoubtedly each school builds and adapts practices which are, in effect, adaptations of the conceptual model. These adaptations are influenced by each school's own unique circumstances within their wider sociocultural context.

A wider systemic conceptual model

For my wider systemic conceptual model, students in their final two years of primary schooling are supported in their reading development by a range of players (see Figure 4). These players continually interact amongst each other, forming layers of differing contexts to promote learning to read. These interchanges are dynamic and may be continually adapting as structures and mechanisms for support are developed or transformed. Also, the players' roles differ as they lead and support students in learning to read in a variety of forms. I suggest that there are five major components (refer to Figure 4). These components are the school; the home and wider family; agencies who provide advanced study and research; the external agencies that support schooling in general and/or students in particular in learning to

read; and finally the Government and the Ministry of Education. Surrounding all of these components is the wider social and cultural environment. The players in these components provide support in reading for all 11- to 13-year-old students in primary schools, but the extent to which their involvement directly interfaces with the students differs.

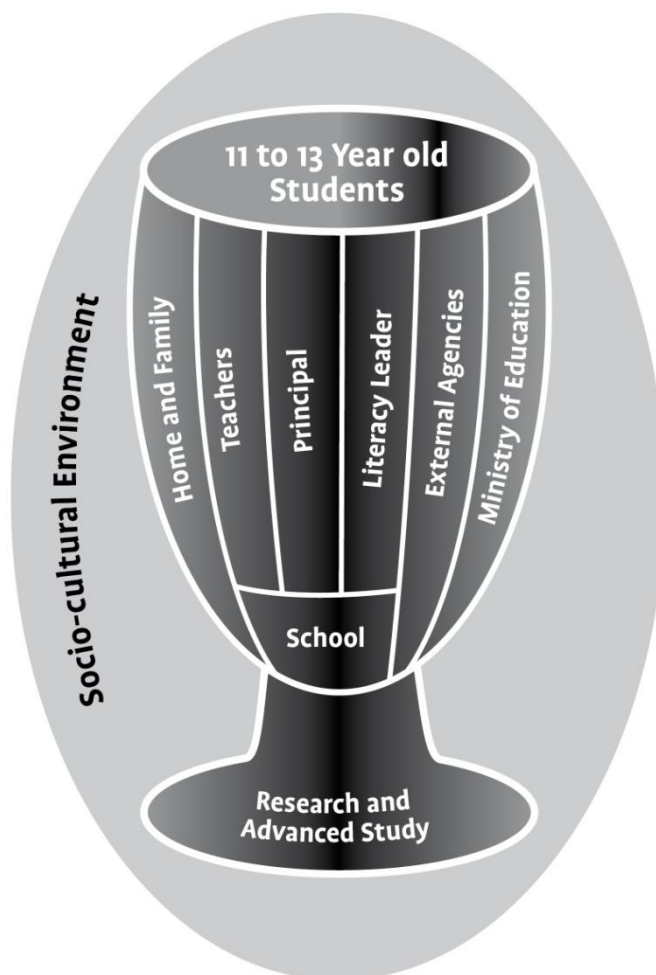


Figure 4. A conceptual model of supporting reading

The range of players together provides a dynamic, yet systemic structure of support for these young adolescent students. The students are nurtured as each of these groups ideally works collaboratively to feed in and grow a positive and effective learning environment in reading achievement and motivation to engage in reading.

The school context

The school directly provides leadership in supporting students in reading by supplying expertise in teaching, providing quality resources, developing a culturally supportive learning environment and fostering positive home-school partnerships. The school comprises

three interrelated parts: the school principal, the literacy leader and the teachers. They are all involved in dynamic interchanges that shape and structure their interactions amongst each other and ultimately influence how they both individually and together develop and access resources and build positive learning relationships with the students.

The principal

It is within this school context that the principal leads the orchestration of a school-wide cohesive and focused team. Here, the principal works strategically with school staff to develop key strategies to raise reading achievement. The practices and beliefs of the principal are key to building a collaborative environment of continued professional learning, where relational trust is established with staff and a vision of a positive school climate is fostered to support students in reading. This trust includes distributing leadership with the teaching staff and encouraging democratic processes in decision-making to develop a whole school plan in literacy learning.

The literacy leader

At times, the literacy leader may also have the role of a teacher within the school. But alongside this, or perhaps as a distinct entity in literacy leadership, the literacy leader has a role of leading literacy development within the wider school context. The literacy leader works collaboratively alongside teachers to improve reading outcomes and provide opportunities for the whole school staff to assess needs and set goals for where focused and explicit teaching can improve reading outcomes for all of the students school-wide.

The literacy leader works strategically alongside the principal to help promote and foster understandings and beliefs about pedagogical practices to improve reading. Within this context, the literacy leader works both with the principal and the teachers to identify at-risk groups of students and targets resourcing to support these students within the school-wide plan. The nature and quality of the interrelationships between the principal and the literacy leader play a significant role in the credibility and trust of the in-school professional development in literacy learning. Their relationship is in tandem and to some extent only sustainable if both work together in accord. This is a critical element in getting teacher 'buy in' to develop collaborative and sustainable school-wide goals in improving teacher practices and student achievement in reading.

The teachers

The teachers represent a major consideration in the classroom interactions with their students. The individual teacher's attitudes, values and beliefs about learning to read, can influence their instructional decision-making on a minute-to-minute, day-to-day basis. I contend that teachers who view themselves as learners tend to be more open to reflecting on their teaching practices. In doing so they seek to further their knowledge and understandings about research-based theories and practices of how young adolescent students are motivated and develop their reading skills. This can impact on the quality of relationships they have with their students. In an environment where teachers are reflective practitioners, they are more likely to negotiate and plan purposeful classroom contexts, monitor and share student achievement, and explain and discuss the learning intentions with their students. A teacher's instructional philosophy is crucial to the collaborative discussion that might occur while reading and talking about texts. This process begins within the classroom context of group or whole class discourse where the teacher facilitates student-led learning and debate about texts without taking on an overtly authoritarian role.

Additionally, in developing an effective learning environment in literacy, teachers are often supported by teacher aides. This is more particularly the case when students in their class have been identified with particular learning needs.

Working together within the school

In considering the varying players in the school environment who support students' reading either directly or indirectly it is evident that there is a continuing and simultaneous flow effect amongst them. The representation is not hierarchical but rather collaborative and flowing as the principal, literacy leader and teachers interact in different forums with each other.

Research and advanced study

I use the metaphor of a goblet to illuminate the key role advanced study (at a postgraduate level) and research play in supporting a strong and sustainable learning environment. Research and advanced study are situated at the base of the goblet. This provides the foundation and support for the outer exterior of the cup of the goblet which is made of components crafted together. Within each component are the players who work together to

protect and support the contents of the goblet – our next generation. Thus, as members of the school staff seek to improve their knowledge and understandings in literacy learning, they can engage in advanced study. This may involve implementing research in the area of literacy, but indeed it includes reading and critically analysing the research literature on reading development. This advanced study by one individual in the school, like strengthening the outer exterior of the goblet, not only provides benefits to the staff member engaged in the post graduate study but also can in a flow-on manner begin to further enrich the wider-school environment and ultimately the students. I suggest that the domain of advanced study (for example, postgraduate study in literacy education) directly influences improvement in implementing pedagogical practices, particularly those specific to that domain or subject area. The more members of the staff who engage in advanced study and research, the more likely this will benefit the school team as a whole and ultimately the students.

The home

As I have considered the context of the school and the players who work within the school environment, it is also necessary to reflect on the home, which alongside the school, contributes to supporting young adolescents' reading. From a sociocultural view of how learning occurs, effective partnerships between the home and the school interact and work together in supporting reading development.

It is within the context of the home, that students and their parents, along with their wider family interact together in ways which build and support reading development. The resources and opportunities the parents, grandparents, siblings and wider family provide, impact on the child. Not only does the mother play a key role in encouraging and supporting reading development, but also the father is also influential in their child's attitude to and interest in reading. Both parents' interest in reading for information or leisure provides a powerful model to the developing reader. Activities that parents engage in with their children such as visiting community libraries and reading books aloud to their children all further support reading development. It may initially appear that what happens in the home is distinct from what occurs in the school context, but this is only partially the case.

The critical nature of a close relationship between the teacher and the parents underpins more particularly the importance of the connection between parents and the teacher in supporting

young adolescent students to read. The dialogue and interrelationship between home and school are both crucial. This is particularly the case for at-risk students who are struggling in reading. Processes of reporting student achievement in reading, discussing school and home strategies together to support the learner, and directly modeling to the student that their parent/s and their teacher are working in harmony to improve their learning and reading are all key factors. When this structure of two-way dialogue and support does not occur, particularly for the struggling reader, the balance of support from the other major model components is seriously weakened and the student is further at risk of entering secondary schooling without the much needed skills and understanding in reading fluency, automaticity and comprehension.

External agencies

Local community libraries, along with their staff, provide a resource rich environment for 11- to 13-year-old students. The range of text types that libraries offer include resources such as picture books, novels, non-fiction texts, magazines, newspapers, audio and video electronic resources and frequently Internet access to multimedia resources. The availability of these resources in New Zealand community libraries, often at minimal or no cost, is a resource which can enhance reading opportunities and arguably outcomes for all students.

Additionally, external agencies such as literacy advisors and literacy consultants work with the wider school staff to improve outcomes for students in reading and literacy learning. When players such as literacy advisors, literacy consultants and librarians undertake postgraduate study their improved levels of theoretical understandings and research-based practice in literacy learning further enhances the learning of staff in schools who they work alongside. Ultimately this affects teaching practices and school-wide strategies to support reading.

Government and ministry of education

The Government, the Ministry of Education including the Education Review Office provide another key area for supporting literacy learning. The connection between the regional, government and Ministry of Education context, to the agencies external to schools is critical as government funding and policies of how it is implemented affect the extent and quality of literacy professional development within schools. Additionally, regional and government funding and policy impact on the resourcing of community and national libraries. As I

consider the interplay between the Government, the Ministry of Education and external agencies I am aware of the dynamic nature of these interrelationships. Changes to government policies can mean there are changes to the educational environment, which at times will advantage or disadvantage the literacy learning opportunities and support mechanisms for all or possibly different groups of 11- to 13-year-old students.

The wider social and cultural environment

The wider social and cultural environment in which all of these components exist can vary for different groups of students. For example, the interactions and experiences associated to literacy learning may differ depending on where a student is situated geographically, the residential mobility of their parents, and the cultural groups their family associates with. The range of influences that occur in the wider socio-cultural environment for many students is not static but changes and adapts. These influences can include: church or religious affiliations, ethnicity, languages and cultural group organisations, socio-economic area and the associated community facilities, rural or city/town communities, sporting and leisure activities, access to multimedia, influences of natural disasters on community's facilities, opportunities for travel both nationally and internationally, and experiences with the arts (dance, drama, music and visual arts).

Additionally, affective conditions are influenced by the wider sociocultural environment. As Ruddell and Unrau (2004a) explain in their model of reading as a meaning- construction process, the affective conditions include attitude towards reading and the content of texts, motivation to read, a reader's orientation and perspective towards particular types of text, and the sociocultural values and beliefs of the students. Depending on individual circumstances these affective conditions vary for young adolescence students. However, underlying reading development is the inclination to read. As discussed in Chapter Eleven young adolescents may not consider reading a "cool activity," so teachers and those in the wider school context need to initiate a range of strategies that make reading fun. This can include ensuring students have ready access to age-related, high-interest and ability-appropriate books in both the classroom and the school library or using information communication technologies (ICT).

The 11- to 13-year-old students

Young adolescent students may be more likely to be seeking and/ or be given the beginnings of independence from their family. A large part of their applying and practising reading associated skills occurs in the wider social context. I contend at this age young adolescents are more likely to be reaching out to interpret and trial ideas, apply their literacy learning in the reality of their world and make sense of reading and literacy by interacting with a range of people within their sociocultural environment.

Conclusion

Arising from this study is my wider systemic conceptual model for supporting young adolescents' reading. This model encompasses the school, the home, external agencies that support schooling, the Government and Ministry of Education, and advanced study and research. All of the players with differing formal responsibilities in the components interrelate providing dynamic and complex layers of support for 11- to 13-year-old students. Surrounding all of these components is the sociocultural environment. My conceptual model thus takes a sociocultural perspective of learning. The model illuminates how young adolescent students, [and what supports their reading development, are influenced by many interrelated components within wider society.

Chapter Thirteen draws together the findings from my multiple case study research investigation, discusses the limitations, makes recommendations for policy and practice, and suggests areas for future research.

Section Four

Chapter Thirteen

Conclusions and looking to the future

In this research I set out to investigate the wider systemic issues that supported 11- to 13-year-old students in reading. The case study schools I investigated had reportedly regular, sustained and effective guided reading occurring in the upper primary classes. I wanted to understand the unique features and/or special characteristics that had positioned the Year 7 and 8 teachers in these five schools to successfully implement guided reading. However, as outlined in Chapter Nine, when snapshots of what had occurred during the guided reading lessons were analysed, it was evident that the quality of many of the guided reading lessons could be further improved. Additionally, the quantitative analyses of data from the teachers' and students' interactions during guided reading illuminated the sometimes contradictory nature of interview and observation data. My research shows that although teachers may suggest and articulate specific pedagogical practices, not all teachers in the case study schools were bridging the gap between 'rhetoric' and 'reality'. This finding, which for me was a little unexpected, highlights the importance of integrating quantitative analysis of classroom observation data along with interviews about teachers' practice. The evidence from these case studies strongly suggests this is an essential part of any predominantly qualitative research in education.

The most important finding of my research is that teachers alone cannot bear the burden of being solely responsible for the reading achievement of the wide range of students in their classes. As demonstrated in my conceptual ecological model for supporting the reading for 11- to 13-year-old students in Chapter Twelve, there is a range of players with different formal responsibilities. All of these players have a role in working collaboratively to support reading for these young adolescents. This includes the principal leading the school. Similar to the conductor in an orchestra, a principal brings together a range of players with different formal responsibilities to interact in a positive and cohesive manner in supporting young adolescent readers. Furthermore, my research shows the responsibility cannot rest solely on

the principals' shoulders. Factors such as external funding that influence outcomes are decided by external agencies. This was demonstrated in the low decile multicultural school, School E (as discussed in Chapter Ten), that gained extra funding because of Government/Ministry of Education initiatives and policies. The principal utilising this funding had led his school staff to make a substantive and effective difference in reading outcomes at his school. The wider governmental policies and subsequent funding lines were not controlled by the principal of School E. Instead he manipulated the situation to provide benefit to students' reading outcomes within his school.

Two other case study schools also received external funding as outlined in Chapter Five. At School D, an integrated Catholic school, the church community had invested extra funding into information communication technology to support literacy and learning in general. Similarly, at School A, the principal carefully positioned the staff with differing formal responsibilities within the school to benefit all students. Though not within her decision-making control, she had an added bonus. Her school was the recipient of a community development grant supporting literacy development in all schools in the wider South Island West Coast region. This begs the question of who has ultimate control of all these components that support reading for young adolescent students. The evidence from these case studies strongly suggests that the control for supporting reading for young adolescents rests with all of the wider systemic components outlined in Chapter Twelve. If our young adolescent students are to be supported in their reading, then the range of players with differing formal responsibilities within my conceptual model, all need to work together. My research shows if one of these supports falters, is weakened or withdrawn then the flow-on effect may be to the detriment of particular groups within year 7 and 8 classes.

In the context of the five case study schools, the findings provided insights into how at that particular time and place, with those particular staff, reportedly effective reading was occurring in Years 7 and 8. Nonetheless, in any school setting, variables such as these are complex and changing. Mosenthal and Mekklesen (2008) in their study of effective U.S. schools in teaching literacy, remind us that situational variables challenge any packaged or ready means to success. These variables can include student demographics, the duration and extent of professional development, the attitudes and qualities of the teachers and the interactional human complexity within the natural environment of a school. Heeding this caution, the conclusions drawn from the study of five New Zealand schools can only be

considered as particular to these schools. However, the findings build on current literature and theories of reading, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three. This combined knowledge helps guide understandings and assist in uncovering the wider systemic factors that allow some schools to facilitate effective, sustained and regular reading programmes for 11- to 13-year-old students.

As discussed in Chapter Two, defining and identifying ‘effective’ teaching in reading needed careful consideration. In this multiple case study, the schools selected as having year 7 and 8 teachers who were effective in teaching reading were identified using a range of measures. This decision was guided by concerns from different commentators on the sole use of standardised testing to measure effectiveness (Connell, 2009; Duffy & Hoffman, 2002; Freebody, et al., 2008; Gorard, 2010; Mosenthal & Mekkelsen, 2008). International studies on effective teachers of literacy had similarly used a selection of these types of measures (Poulson, et al., 2001; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 2006; B. M. Taylor, et al., 2000).

The different players who support reading

Let us now look at the different players with differing formal responsibilities who together supported reading for these young adolescent students.

School leadership

Firstly, my discussion turns to the leadership within the schools. The multi-faceted nature of any school, its personnel and community can all contribute and be influential in supporting children to read. Underpinning and of critical importance to this is the leadership of the school principal. In the five case study schools strong leadership by the principals was evident. The principals had developed relational trust with their staff and together were working towards a shared vision. Apparent across all interviews with parents, students, teachers and literacy leaders was a quiet confidence that each of the case study schools were being led in a successful manner. My research suggests that qualitative research, such as in my thesis, which interviews a range of different players with differing formal responsibilities, alongside that of the children and parents, who ultimately are the clients of the school, increases the trustworthiness of the findings. Evident, in my analyses of the interview data from this range of players was their underlying belief in a principal who

listens, works alongside people, and is constantly guiding and supporting staff. This type of leadership helps ensure an optimum learning environment for all students.

Nevertheless, one finding in regards to the principals became apparent from the analyses of the structured observation of guided reading. Although the principals were involved in the literacy professional development, their nomination of teachers they perceived as effective teachers of reading, in some cases raised issues. For example, in particular, the principal at School B who had nominated teacher 3 in her school as an effective teacher of reading, either appeared to have different understanding of sound pedagogical approaches in teaching guided reading, or had not observed teacher 3 taking guided reading. If the latter was the case as I would suspect, the principal may well have based her judgment on teacher 3's articulation of appropriate practices, rather than her explicit ability to implement what she described as effective teaching of reading. Principals, either by their own observations of reading practices, or by the delegation of this role to senior leadership staff such as literacy leaders, should be knowledgeable of classroom reading practices. Furthermore, these pedagogical practices need to be based on research informed practices.

Literacy leaders and professional development

Part of the leadership included promoting whole school commitment to professional development in literacy. External literacy consultants were leading sustained, regular and whole school professional development in literacy. The professional development was contextualised to meet the specific needs of each school's community. As outlined in Chapter Five, at one school, when the external professional development team did not meet the needs of the school staff, the principal in consultation with staff appointed an alternative and more suitable external professional development facilitator. Ensuring that the 'fit' was right for his school was essential. Highly evident with all principals was their drive to have a coherent, focused and smooth pathway forward in raising literacy achievement. Further to this, was their commitment in taking an active role in the professional development, both as a learner and as part of a team working collaboratively to improve reading outcomes.

Resourcing not only external professional development facilitators, but also internal literacy leadership was a key tactic of principals. At each school, the principal had appointed a literacy leader to support and lead staff over a long-term basis, further building on the external facilitator's expertise. The literacy leaders were provided with regular, weekly,

teacher release time from their classroom responsibilities so they could focus on supporting and mentoring colleagues. The literacy leader at each school was a key part of the team in developing strategies to align with school-wide goals to improve reading achievement. As discussed in Chapter Six, throughout the five case study schools, the literacy leaders and teachers all believed that they could make a difference to all children's literacy learning. Deficit thinking and making assumptions on contextual background factors about individuals were not evident.

Part of the professional development included upskilling teachers to use data from standardised testing in reading to identify individual, class and school-wide needs. At some schools the literacy leaders helped further support teachers to gather, input and interpret the data. Sharing and explaining test results with parents and students was common practice. Areas of concern, such as low-progress readers and culturally diverse students, were targeted as a whole school strategy. Employing part-time teachers and/or teacher aides to withdraw children identified as underachieving in reading from their class for small group or individual teaching was utilised.

The teachers

The eight teachers in the case study schools articulated and demonstrated a positive and respectful manner in their interactions with the students. They put effort into positioning reading, in all its different forms, to be viewed as 'cool' by these young adolescent students. The teachers had a genuine interest in young adult fiction and had read numerous books in this area. This intimate knowledge of texts and of their characters and plots were used to promote books and connect students to authors who would capture the student's interests and imagination. Using this knowledge supported teachers as they worked in an individual way with reluctant readers. This finding of the case study teachers having a wide knowledge of children's literature differs from the findings in the study of 1200 UK teachers by Cremin, Mottram, Bearne and Goodwin (2008) and Cremin, et al. (2009) that was discussed in Chapter Two. My research shows that teachers who have a critical knowledge base of children's literature are better positioned to be able to motivate and guide students in the selection of texts, develop informed conversations with the students around characters and plots, and relate with students in a meaningful and shared manner as together they discuss and debate their views and opinions on preferred authors and favourite texts.

The eight teachers in the case study schools regularly read aloud to the whole class. They used intonation, expression and voice characterisation to make books and their characters come to life. Prior to taking a guided reading lesson they had pre-read the text and prepared questions and identified teaching points. The teachers, students and parents articulated the importance of the school and community libraries in providing a range and plentitude of reading material.

The teachers reported working alongside their teaching colleagues, often under the guidance of the literacy leaders, to develop and advance their literacy learning within each of their own classroom environments. The critical role of working together as a learning community of reflective practitioners meant that the teacher did not feel that the sole responsibility for raising literacy learning rested on their shoulders. Rather, they believed that as part of an effective team they could work collaboratively in a supportive teaching community to improve reading outcomes for their young adolescent students.

The parents

The reading habits of the parents were influential in encouraging students to read for information and pleasure. Fathers who were reportedly not avid readers influenced their sons' attitude towards the worth and relevance of reading. Some of the mothers interviewed expressed their concern that if their husband/partner viewed reading negatively then this had a detrimental effect on their son's attitude to reading. Many of the students interviewed discussed their parents' reading habits, indicating that this influenced their attitude and interest in reading. This correlated with my earlier research with colleagues (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afai, et al., 2006; Parkhill, et al., 2005), where we had found young adolescent Pasifika boys' attitudes to reading were influenced positively or negatively by the role modeling of their fathers.

When considering boys in particular, the cyclical nature of generational attitudes to reading sets a challenging agenda for educators to address. Negative attitudes of fathers to reading may well be deep-seated and evolve from their own school experiences and success, or lack of it, as a reader. In this study, one school which had students from a range of backgrounds in a small town community, had a principal who had initiated an innovative way to address this issue. At School A, the development of a 'boys-only' class, led by a male teacher with a passion for literature and a belief that students' perceptions and views about texts were just

as valuable as his own, had made a difference to boys' attitudes and motivation to read for pleasure. When boys do not have a father as a role model in regards to positive attitudes to reading, a male teacher who can win the respect of his students and exhibits a love of reading, has the potential to break down barriers and motivate young adolescent boys to view reading as not only valuable but pleasurable.

As discussed in Chapter Seven, what some of the parents did raise was the range of experiences they had with different schools that the children in their families had attended. While all were overall supportive of the current case study school that their 11- to 13 year-old son or daughter was attending, several had experienced negative situations at prior schools. Of note was the concern voiced by parents who themselves admitted having limited skills in reading. They reported frustration when encountering problems with their child being adequately supported in reading by the school system. What my thesis has highlighted is that the manner in which a teacher and other school staff interact with parents is even more critical when parents have limited personal literacy skills or interest in literacy. Furthermore, as well as a parent's own limited literacy skills, was their limited knowledge, confidence and skills in who to approach for help. These parents wanted to be knowledgeable about how to best address their concerns regarding their own child's literacy learning. Of real concern to any educator wanting to raise achievement of all children, are parents who are anxious that their children will not have the same disadvantage of poor literacy skills. This is further exacerbated when parents with low personal literacy skills confront obstacles whilst seeking help and advice for their child. It is challenging enough as a literate parent with English as a first language to challenge your child's teacher and/or principal about the underachievement of your child. An important finding from my research is that all parents want the best support for their children in reading development. However, there are some parents who need extra support and advocacy in this process. The findings from these case study schools strongly indicate that there needs to be a readily accessible agency or appointed person from whom they can seek guidance and support. This study has illuminated the vulnerability of these parents who either have low literacy skills or perceive that their literacy skills are low. The evidence from my thesis suggests that if educators are to counter the continuation of intergenerational underachievement in literacy achievement then strong support mechanisms need to be in place, not only for the low achieving students but also to support parents with low literacy skills.

My research shows that developing mechanisms for effective two-way dialogue between home and school which provides a strong network of support for learners, including young adolescent students, should be a key tactic at all schools. Learning to read is not a skill that occurs exclusively within the school gates. Time spent with parents and wider family are where the larger part of a child's understandings, beliefs and attitudes to learning, and reading in particular, are situated. The evidence from these case studies strongly suggests that educational leaders need to resource schools in a manner that this nexus between home and school can be better positioned. We should consider heeding earlier research, such as the longitudinal study of Wylie and Hodgen (2007) on New Zealand children. They conclude that parents', and more particularly mothers' attitudes and ability in reading, were found to have a strong link to their children's attitudes and abilities. Within our primary education system, we must provide a welcoming and culturally inclusive bridge between the home and school for parents. This is even more critical for parents with lower ability in literacy and/or English as a first language. Furthermore, what my research has shown is that this connection between home and school needs to continue through into the final years of primary schooling.

The evidence from these case studies suggests the potential for recurring, generational underachievement in reading, with the underlying maintenance of the status quo within society, can be addressed. Schools need to be resourced to have personnel to focus on developing more effective and positive home-school links. This is particularly the case in regards to improving reading. This aligns with my colleagues and my prior research on Pasifika students, parents and stakeholders (Fletcher, Parkhill, Taleni, Fa'afoi, et al., 2009; Taleni, et al., 2007) and also the work of Mara (cited in Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2002). In both these New Zealand studies the parents advocated that a school-parent-community liaison person would help overcome barriers, particularly for parents for whom English was not their first language.

A key finding of my thesis was that the parents of young adolescent students still had a strong interest in their children's reading. Many reported working alongside their 11- to 13-year-old children to foster and support literacy learning. Effective home school partnerships and parents' involvement in their child's education are critical. This has been highlighted by Hattie (2009), who in his syntheses of over 800 meta-analyses that relate to student

achievement, found the impact of parental involvement in students' academic achievement had a notable effect size (.51).

However, research reporting on parents and their involvement in their children's literacy learning frequently focuses on the early years (see, for example, Morgan, et al., 2009). My study shows that further research is needed to investigate home school partnerships that foster parental involvement with young adolescent students in literacy learning. This is particularly important for those students who are underachieving in our education system.

The students

Although not all students in this study enjoyed reading, they viewed learning to read, comprehend and develop word vocabulary as important. Teachers were seen as critical in supporting their literacy learning. Most students were positive about the different parts of the reading programmes. They viewed opportunities to discuss text in group and independent activities as important in helping them improve their reading achievement. Worksheets following guided reading were viewed negatively. Many of these young adolescent students perceived not only their mother to be influential in encouraging and supporting their reading, but just as importantly their fathers.

An interesting finding from the study was the particularly positive comments about learning to read and the classroom learning environment from the boys who were in a 'boys only' class at state full primary school. Although, these boys may have perceived that the factor of learning in class without girls was advantageous, what the research highlighted was the effective pedagogical practices that their male teacher, Teacher 2, demonstrated. This was highly evident in the analyses of the structured observational data in Chapter Nine. Arguably, their teacher's highly effective teaching strategies may have been more important than the fact that the boys had been clustered together in one classroom learning environment.

None of the students discussed instances of poor classroom management and/or bullying by peers, as had been the case in my prior research with colleagues on Pasifika Years 6 to 9 students who were underachieving in reading. Evident in the informal 'in situ' observations were well organised classroom environments with on-task respectful students. This respect was also evident in the teachers' interactions and relationships with their students. At the

heart of effective teaching in reading, and learning in general, is teachers building positive and trusting relationships with their students, where students feel they are safe and valued.

The role of the teacher during guided reading

The eight teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter Nine, the structured observational schedule of a guided reading lesson taken by each teacher painted a different picture in respect to the overtly authoritative role of many of these teachers during guided reading. Research such as that of Soter et al. (2008) suggests the choice of teaching approaches teachers used in reading, influences the quality of discourse. These authors found in their US study on the use of small group discussions to promote high-level thinking and high-level comprehension that “productive discussions are structured and focused yet not dominated by the teacher” (p. 389). Developing strategies to support teachers to change their practices ideally should be coupled with time to reflect on and consider best research-based practice. For example, as Soter (2008) have advocated, students are better prepared for thoughtful and focused discourse if they have had the opportunity to read the text prior to instructional group reading.

Most of the eight teachers in the five case study schools followed common practice in New Zealand schools and introduced the students to an unseen text in the guided reading session. Further building on the concept of reading a text prior to instructional group reading, the students could be given some prior scaffolds that promote quality talk about text so they would come to the group with discussion points and questions. If the teacher was then able to take more of a complementary observational role during the group discourse, he or she would be able to assess those students who were able to critically discuss and analyse different text types. I suggest that this data could be used to regroup students. In this way students, in particular those who are less vocal in articulating, questioning and/ or critically analysing text, can be targeted for further focused and supportive teaching.

This type of change to promote more student-led dialogue can be developmental. In line with Pearson (2009b), the gradual release of responsibility of the teacher to allow the students to lead discussion and have fuller interpretive authority would encourage and promote higher level thinking and critique of text.

The low decile multicultural school

The findings from School E provide insights into supporting our most at-risk New Zealand students. When discussing new times in teaching literacy, Limbrick and Aikman (2005) alerted us to the changing demographic landscape that teachers in New Zealand schools are facing. The authors reminded us that in New Zealand schools, students and their parents and families are far more likely in the 21st century to derive from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse backgrounds. School E, with its diverse multicultural population, represented the changing demographic landscape within schools that Limbrick and Aikman referred to when they challenged educators to adapt practices to better meet the needs of changing school populations. I suggest that School E provides an important example of the capacity to turn around a negative school culture as well as student performance in literacy, within two or more years.

The fact that only one low decile school had been nominated by the research advisory committee as a potential school with effective teaching of reading in Years 7 and 8 was arguably a sobering reflection of the current status of schools. This school had the highest proportion of Māori and Pasifika students of any of the other case study schools. Much literature in New Zealand had indicated that students predominantly underachieving in reading were from lower socio-economic areas and/ or deriving from Pasifika or Māori ethnicity (see, for example, Alton-Lee, 2003; Crooks, et al., 2009; Flockton & Crooks, 2001, 2005). If, as the literature suggests, most of the students underachieving in reading tend to be situated in low decile schools and/or be Pasifika or Māori, then this school was one that merited spotlighting in the thesis. This was done in Chapter Ten.

Understanding what the factors were that helped this low-decile, multicultural intermediate school succeed and have teachers who were effectively teaching reading to this diverse group of young adolescent students seemed pivotal in analysing some of the critical issues facing the New Zealand education system. At this school, which had been under review by Education Review Office in the years prior to this research, a newly appointed principal had led a dramatic change in the learning environment in the school. Firstly, it would seem having an external agency charged with reviewing school plays a critical role in identifying schools where things are faltering and the students' achievement and well-being are compromised. Secondly, it validates the critical role a principal plays in leading and

supporting positive change within a whole school environment. The principal had a background and positive reputation in working alongside culturally diverse communities, particularly Pasifika parents and students. On top of this much needed key quality, he had a track record of successful leadership.

To further support him, at this time the Ministry of Education was providing additional funding to such schools to enhance learning. The principal used this to employ, in collaboration with a cluster of schools, an effective and respected external literacy consultant. Additionally, he employed a part-time literary advisor within the school and part-time teachers to withdraw groups of low achieving students in reading. This type of discretionary funding that allowed the principal to develop a cohesive plan to implement school-wide strategies was a critical element needed to help turn the school's track record around. Governments and those leading education nationally should ensure that additional monetary resourcing, particularly to low-decile, multicultural schools, is available to be used effectively to raise reading achievement. While this additional funding should be available at all schools, it is even more critical for schools with higher percentages of students most at risk of failing in New Zealand primary schools. My research indicates that this must be a priority if we are serious in shaping schooling so that it does not merely reinforce the status quo within our wider society.

Final words

In the introduction chapter of this thesis I asked if what we, as New Zealand educators, perceive as effective practice in reading in the final years of primary schooling, is really effective. Although these schools and their teachers had been nominated as effective teachers of reading and indeed the overall school data on the standardised test results and ERO assessments confirmed this, the research investigation identified areas for further development. The high rate of teacher-led dialogue by many of the teachers in the case study schools was for me, a thought provoking and surprising finding. Commentators such as Soter et al. (2008) and Galda and Beach (2004) suggest that high-level comprehension and high-level thinking are much enhanced when the discourse moves from teacher-led to student-led. As B. M. , Pearson and colleagues (2003) conclude in their U.S. study of effective teachers of literacy, effective teachers frequently give students the responsibility for facilitating their own discussion about texts and sustain high student involvement. This was not consistently the situation in many of the reportedly effective teachers' guided reading lessons. Although

caution is needed in using this snapshot of observational findings, the fact that these were supposedly the more effective teachers of reading for 11- to 13-year-old students does raise questions about the quality of reading teaching in the majority of Year 7 and 8 classrooms in New Zealand schools. It is acknowledged that an extended period of time spent observing may have presented different data. The snapshot of findings provokes a determination to further research this area. Nevertheless, the evidence from these case studies challenges any complacency that educators might have that the explicit teaching of guided reading in the upper primary classrooms is strongly reflective of current research based practices that facilitate high-level comprehension and high-level thinking. We may have pockets of schools within New Zealand where 11- to 13-year-old students' achievement in reading is being raised, arguably within these reportedly effective teachers' classrooms. Nevertheless, further improvements in teaching practices must continue to raise the bar in exemplary teaching of reading and improving reading outcomes for all students.

Even so, there are other points also worthy of consideration. Although not selected because of the school's involvement in literacy professional development, all of the five schools were involved in sustained literacy professional development. This finding does provoke a question. Do schools that are *not* involved in literacy professional development have teachers who are effective in teaching reading? In other words, is sustained literacy professional development a pre-requisite for effectively teaching reading? Much of the research discussed in this thesis on effective teachers of literacy has indicated that sustained literacy professional development has been a key ingredient (see, for example, Lai, et al., 2009; Poulson, et al., 2001; B. M. Taylor, et al., 2003; Wray, et al., 2002). If schools need continued professional development for their staff to improve the teaching of reading, then this needs to become a national priority and influence national education policies and funding. Another question arises if arguably, it is predominantly schools that are undertaking literacy professional development that have more effective teachers of reading. Does and/or has the pre-service teacher education adequately prepare/d teachers to become effective teachers of reading?

Unquestionably, pre-service teacher education can be improved, but alongside this there is another ongoing role that tertiary educators/ universities need to further develop and advocate. Continually throughout the findings, the only teacher who had been engaged in advanced study in the area of children's literature and literacy learning articulated and

modelled many effective literacy practices that were research based. On the other hand, he may have had well developed pedagogical knowledge and theoretical understandings that had stimulated him to undertake advanced study. Undoubtedly, he had two other unique features in comparison to the other seven teachers. He was male (the other teachers were all women) and he taught a 'boys only' class. However, these two differences alone could not account for the exemplary practices he outlined and I observed in his classroom, as well as being corroborated by the students, parents and principal. Additionally, at the same school, School A, two other staff members had been involved in advanced study. Firstly, the principal of the school had undertaken advanced study in reading to become a reading recovery teacher earlier in her career. Secondly, as discussed in Chapter Five, teacher 1 at School A had undertaken her Masters thesis in gifted and talented education. The principal, aware of this teacher's strengths used it to the advantage of the students in her school.

Another example of postgraduate study undertaken by staff influencing and enhancing teaching was at School C. The deputy principal at this large intermediate had been delegated by her principal to lead curricula throughout the school. Her study towards her masters in education, with a specialisation in literacy, was benefiting the wider school as she shared her learning and application of it with other staff.

I suggest that the in-depth nature of continuing study and research, with the requirement for critical examination of both seminal and recent literature on effective pedagogical practices, positions educators to become reflective practitioners. The evidence from these case studies tends to suggest that along with school-wide professional development, the pursuit of advanced study, may allow a stronger knowledge of and understanding in a range of research-based effective teaching and leadership practices. This in turn may influence the individual and their teaching colleagues and, ultimately, outcomes for students. In this regard, I would like to see further research that investigates the relationships between effective teaching of reading and advanced study in literacy.

A challenge that confronts all schools involved in any type of professional development is to appoint external consultants who are articulating and supporting not only seminal research but also current 'cutting edge' research on best practice (B. M. Taylor, et al., 2003). For example, at School E, the low decile multicultural school with possibly some of the most at risk students in New Zealand schools, the external literacy consultant was completing his

doctoral studies in literacy. Without doubt, he was immersed in current literature on raising literacy achievement. This external consultant's postgraduate study provides yet another example of the immense importance and value of those involved in the education of students either at the 'chalkface' or in leadership roles, to engage in advanced study.

Duffy and Hoffman (2002), seminal researchers on effective teaching, conclude that the term 'effectiveness' has an impression of authoritative conclusiveness. These two researchers cautioned that in actuality there are additional questions to investigate surrounding perceptions of 'effectiveness' and how effective practices can be further improved. The findings from my study provide further evidence of any perceptions of effectiveness being conclusive. A four-pronged measure for effectiveness was utilised in my study. They were the nomination by the advisory committee, of schools they believed to be effective in teaching Year 7 to 8 students in reading; the nomination of the effective Year 7 to 8 teachers of reading by their principal; positive reports from the Education Review Office; and the school principal supplying evidence of the overall reading achievement of the students in his or her school. Yet, what were evident from the analyses of the data were some teachers' pedagogical practices needed to be improved. Even though all schools had been involved in ongoing literacy professional development, my study has illuminated the need to move teachers from discussing and/or articulating their perceptions of effective literacy research-based practice towards consistently implementing and reflecting on such pedagogical practices.

This case study research investigation found numerous areas of effective practice both within the classroom and by the wider school staff, but it also identified some common aspects in these particular five schools where teacher, wider school-community practices and national educational policy could be enhanced. What the research investigation has uncovered is that there is a complex layer of interrelationships and conditions that can work together to support and promote effective teaching of reading.

This complex web of interweaving factors was to me the most encouraging at the one low decile, multicultural school in this study. The principal fought against the odds at turning what had been a school with poor Education Review Office reports and underachievement in reading into a school where there was a collaborative community of practitioners working towards improving reading outcomes for some of New Zealand's most at-risk students. In

this school, a key finding was the critical role that the supplementary funding from the Ministry of Education had in financially supporting principal-led strategies to enhance reading outcomes for all learners. If there was only to be one implication for policy development from this thesis then that should undoubtedly be for the Ministry of Education to provide this type of supplementary funding long-term for New Zealand's most at-risk schools, namely those very low decile schools with higher percentages of Māori and Pasifika students. A contributing factor to the low decile multicultural school's success in this thesis was that an exemplary principal had been appointed who had a strong track record of working alongside Pasifika students and their families in raising achievement.

An unexpected, yet critical methodological finding for me from this predominantly qualitative case study investigation was the importance of including a structured observational schedule of the guided reading lessons. Although in this study, the observations only provided a snapshot of the interactions between the teacher and the students, the analyses of these data provided a different lens to view the findings compared to the interview data. The findings from my study have indicated that when undertaking qualitative investigations, researchers should integrate this with quantitative data collection from classroom observations to ensure that issues researched are investigated through different lenses. Clearly, interview data alone can be misleading. For example, teacher 3's perceptions of how she implemented her instructional reading were not confirmed in the analyses of the structured observation of her guided reading lesson.

Additionally, as discussed in Chapter Six, any research about students should include listening to their perceptions and lived realities. Respecting and acknowledging young adolescents as knowledgeable and involved in educational and social issues that impact on their literacy learning is crucial. Furthermore, the experiences and concerns of their parents are equally important if we as educators are to improve home-school partnerships. As Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai and Richardson (2003) maintain, teachers are frequently unaware of the huge gap between a teacher's beliefs and intentions, and the reality of what students experience. Similarly as discussed in Chapter Two, Foster's (2005) research on literacy learning in secondary schools found that although the principals and teachers perceived they had been inclusive and consensual with both parents and students, Foster's interviews with both parents and students reflected a totally opposing reality.

Limitations

Although I am encouraged by the findings, this research has limitations similar to other research on effective schooling. One of the criteria for identifying effective teaching of reading was using the standardised test data presented to me by the school principals. In New Zealand, where schools are self-managing, principals in collaboration with staff are able to select standardised tests that they consider best fits their school situation. At the five case study schools there were two types of standardised tests used. Ideally, it would have been more satisfactory if all the schools had used the same standardised tests and the principals' analyses of this data were presented in a more standard form. Even so, as discussed in Chapter Two there was a caution expressed by numerous researchers in using a standardised test solely to measure effectiveness. Another limitation was that the research project's advisory committee members who nominated the schools that they perceived as effective were unlikely to have a sound knowledge of all schools. In this way their selection would have been limited to schools where they had more 'insider' knowledge.

As the investigation occurred over a one-year period, analyses and observation of growth over a longer time would help gain a deeper understanding of the complexities within each school setting. However, partly addressing this was the focus on the low decile, multicultural school in Chapter Ten. As I was conscious of the uniqueness and critical nature of understanding this school and its success, I worked outside the limits of the data collected from the other four schools.

A greater number of classroom observations in the investigations at each school may then have been helpful. The classroom observations of a guided reading lesson were gathered over one reading session of approximately one hour in duration. Only one group guided lesson in each class was observed using the structured observation schedule. This only provided a selective snapshot of the overall teaching in reading in these classrooms. There may have been other parts of the classroom programme where student-dialogue was encouraged and occurred.

Although the research has a number of limitations, many of these provoked questions where future research might guide our continual quest for knowledge in supporting reading for all students.

Implications for policy and practice

From any research investigation into improving educational outcomes for young adolescents there should be a step forward in improving our policy, practice and knowledge as educators. The evidence from these case studies strongly supports the following implications for policy and practice.

There should be further funded research that explores connections between effective teaching and schooling and advanced study. This nexus between relevant advanced study and effective teaching practices was an unexpected, yet not surprising finding from my study.

Next, as discussed in the opening paragraph to this chapter, I stress that any research study exploring teaching and schooling should integrate qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses. My thesis has highlighted that research based on interview data alone cannot be a reliable means of analysing actual practices. On the other hand, I suggest that research that seeks to understand ways to support reading within the wider systemic environment should not be solely based on a quantitative research investigation.

A follow-up from this recommendation is that principals or a senior staff member should undertake observations of reading practices in the classroom context so they have a sound knowledge of the specific practices occurring in each teacher's reading programme. However, a corollary recommendation to this is that the observer is cognisant of research-based literacy practices that support reading outcomes.

In regards to home school partnerships, I propose that more vulnerable parents, such as those who have low literacy skills or English as a second language, are provided with a mentor or facilitator to ensure they are confident in connecting with their child's teacher and the school community in order to work together in supporting reading.

My final recommendation is that ministries of education or other external agencies which fund education should target extra funding to schools where the more at-risk students in literacy learning are situated. The principal should have the flexibility to target this funding to specific areas that best meet his/her school's specific circumstances. A safety net of agencies such as the Education Review Office can provide a means of ensuring that the

principal and his leadership team are utilising this supplementary funding in a positive and purposeful manner.

Future research directions

Throughout the findings chapters, areas for future research have been suggested. However in summary, this study on students in their final years of primary schooling and the factors that impact on their reading progress has shed light on these frequently under-researched years of reading development. Further research, both in New Zealand and internationally on young adolescent readers and the range of people who impact and influence their reading development would add to our knowledge of how to set students up for success before they enter their secondary schooling years.

My research is particularly important because in New Zealand children are much more likely to be taught reading at ages 11 to 13 than are children in countries where primary schooling ends at age 11 years of age. I suggest that frequently secondary teachers do not see the teaching of reading as part of their job, and that seemingly overnight in the transference from primary to secondary schooling most of them presume that skilled teaching of reading is no longer required. There is an assumption that the children they are teaching have the prerequisite reading skills already, or that the responsibility for the teaching of reading was the responsibility of the primary school system. The age that this transition into secondary occurs needs careful consideration by any country's education system. My research strongly suggests that 11- to 13-year-old students benefit from regular reading instruction. Furthermore, the findings from this thesis indicate that an international research project should look at the positive and negative impact on reading achievement for students changing to a secondary school at age 11 such as in the UK, compared to age 13 as in New Zealand. This type of cross-national research would improve knowledge and understandings of effective wider education systems that ultimately shape and influence reading development for our young adolescent students.

My study indicates the need for further research surrounding effective reading literacy practices for teaching young adolescent students. The majority of studies focusing specifically on the strategies and beliefs of effective teachers in reading originated from the U.S. and the UK. Most of these looked at children from the early years up to the age of eleven. There is a gap in research studies in these countries on effective literacy teaching and

effective schools in raising reading achievement for 11- to 13-year-old students. Additionally, further high quality research on effective teachers of reading in the upper primary years in New Zealand schools would benefit our developing understandings and knowledge in this critical area. However, the research of several notable New Zealand researchers (Lai, et al., 2009; Limbrick & Knight, 2005; Timperley, 2003) that has focused on the critical role of professional development in raising literacy achievement in New Zealand schools, particularly those of diverse learners, has added to our wider understandings of effective practice. Additionally, with the fast changing ethnic demographics in New Zealand and internationally, further research that focuses on ethnic minority students in the later years of primary schooling would support our understandings of how to not only support these students in reading but how we, as educators can become more culturally inclusive. McNaughton, Lai and colleagues (see, for example, Lai, et al., 2009; McNaughton, et al., 2007; McNaughton, et al., 2004) ongoing research in the Auckland region in New Zealand continues to provide insights into supporting particularly Pasifika and Māori students' reading development.

My research uncovered the importance of motivating readers using young adult fiction and sophisticated picture books. The work of researchers such as Cremin, et al. (2009) could provide a platform for further research on how teachers can effectively engage students in reading literature for pleasure within New Zealand schools. Similar to Cremin and colleagues (2008, 2009) this could involve raising the issue of whether there should be a statutory requirement that student teachers undertake a course in children's literature. Another area of research that would help our understandings is exploring how to support boys in their reading, particularly later in their primary schooling. The 'boys-only' class at one of the case study schools aroused an interest in better understanding this positive phenomenon. Should boys be grouped together for learning? Does a positive male role model teacher make a real difference to boys learning? On a similar line the role of fathers in influencing their children's, and more particularly their son's attitude to reading warrants further investigation. Finally, as discussed in Chapter Five, Foster (2005) calls for further research to address the 'blank spots' in our understanding of school leadership and how it contributes to school improvement. This thesis has highlighted how principals are critical in raising achievement. Further research which explores principal leadership over a more sustained period and the influences of educational policies would provide fresh insights into how to support principal professional development.

My closing message

A mother of a 12 year old boy looks tentatively at the interviewer, weighing up how much she should reveal. In a hushed tone, she begins to speak.

But even doing the maths, he has to be able to read the questions and I have tried to get through to Ben that it is not just reading the book, there is putting (understanding) into it.

The researcher quietly asks:

So if you could have your time again, if Ben was five now, knowing what you know now...

The mother looks the researcher in the eye, and with a tone of determination yet tinged with regret she replies:

I would be on this door, every week. I wouldn't say – when the teacher said to me 'No, I am sorry, Ben is not bad enough or we haven't got the funding,' I wouldn't take it again. I regret not coming to see (the principal) especially earlier. Not forward enough, I feel myself. Knowing what I know now, because once I did get hold of the principal, and at that stage she was in charge of Year 7 and 8s and he did then get in to her group (for giving additional support in reading).

Ben did do (outside school tutoring in reading) for three terms. But again his results at the end of that weren't ...he hadn't made a huge gain and it was getting to be a struggle to get the homework done and he didn't seem to be enjoying it, and the money it was costing. (Mother, School A)

My thesis has focused on what teachers, literacy leaders, principals and the wider systemic environment does to support reading, rather than focus on what students have achieved. Young adolescent students' motivation and interest in reading is situated within the everyday lived reality of their class, school, home and wider sociocultural environment. The evidence from these case studies strongly indicates that if we, as educators, want to understand how to improve reading outcomes for students we need to better comprehend this from a 'big picture' perspective. The voices of parents and the students must be heard and listened to if we are to truly comprehend what is happening. Learning to read is not a skill that is learnt in isolation. Reading is not only a complex skill to achieve, it is contextual. Therefore, understanding the context and the varying players who all have specific roles in supporting reading are the cornerstones of knowing how we as a society can improve reading outcomes for all students.

Appendices

Appendix A

Guiding principles to identify effective literacy practice

- Teachers assess, and analyse a range of data, in order to identify students' learning needs, before selecting materials (Ready to Read and School Journals) to use with students, when planning for rich language experiences.
- Teachers use their professional expertise and very sound knowledge of their students' diverse needs, to decide on intended learning outcomes, which may be shared with students, and explicit within the development of the lesson.
- Teachers plan to motivate students and actively engage them with the texts, supporting materials and resources.
- Teachers set students relevant, developmentally appropriate tasks to enable them to meet the intended learning outcomes, while employing a range of effective learning approaches.
- Teachers plan learning outcomes for students to develop and practise learning strategies and to think critically, while asking questions which demand a higher level of thinking, and bring deeper levels of meaning to the text.
- Teachers foster students' metacognitive awareness; they teach them to monitor and reflect on their own learning to become increasingly independent learners, actively engaged in self-assessment, with encouragement from the teacher.
- Teachers arrange opportunities for students to work; over time, across topics and curriculum areas and in a range of settings; including whole-class, group, pair, individual, community, and home-based settings.
- Teachers help students make links with related learning, and build on prior knowledge, skills and experiences; making this linkage relevant, meaningful and explicit.

- Teachers select from a range of instructional strategies to engage students in the planned learning; they model, prompt, question, give feedback, tell, explain, and direct; within the framework of guided, shared and independent experiences, and contexts.
- Teachers foster rich discussion to enhance learning; they encourage students to learn from one another, question and challenge each other, justifying response linked to supporting and relevant texts.
- Teachers, monitor, assess, and reflect on students' learning and use assessment information to inform future teaching, and are flexible to effectively meet the needs of students.
- Teachers use their knowledge of effective literacy practices and theories, and pedagogical knowledge in order to identify best practice, and continue to reflect, and actively seek new approaches and research. They actively refer to, and use and professional resources published by the Ministry (ELPS) and Learning Media.
- Teachers understand the impact of their practice on their teaching-learning relationships with students and develop new approaches that support learning.
- Teachers have high but realistic expectations of students and believe that they can make a difference in their achievement.
- (This has largely been adapted from an e-mail communication sent by S. Ballatyne, Learning Media.)

Appendix B

Focus interview questions

Focus interview questions for principals

- 1) How important do you consider instructional reading to be at this level of schooling?

Why?
- 2) What school-wide assessment practices are implemented and how is the data used to inform teaching?
- 3) What support/professional development is (or has been) available for teachers to enhance their practice?
- 4) Describe the assistance that is available school-wide to enhance literacy achievement for low progress readers.
- 5) What are the specific challenges that your teachers face in the teaching and learning of reading at this level?
- 6) How has the MOE's Literacy Strategy influenced the teaching and learning of reading at your school?
- 7) What school-wide initiatives are in place to ensure that effective reading instruction occurs in your classrooms?

Focus interview questions for literacy leaders

- 1) What do you identify as effective literacy practice in Years 7 &8?
- 2) What resources are commonly used for instructional reading?
- 3) Describe how professional development has impacted on the delivery of the reading instruction?
- 4) On average how much time per day is set aside for instructional reading?
- 5) How much collaboration occurs between teachers on the quality of their programmes and in the interpretation of assessment information?
- 6) What are the biggest challenges facing your classroom teachers in the implementing of quality programmes?
- 7) How do you help teachers who require assistance to deliver quality programmes?
- 8) Describe the assistance that is available to enhance literacy achievement for low progress readers.

Focus interview questions teachers

- 1) How important do you consider the teaching of reading is at this level?
- 2) What particular skills and strategies are necessary for effective reading for entry to the secondary sector?
- 3) What approaches do you use in your instructional reading programme?
- 4) What are the barriers to the teaching of reading at this age level and in this type of school?
- 5) How do your assessment results influence your teaching decisions?
- 6) How do you cater for the low progress reader in your classroom?
- 7) What resources engage children in both instructional and independent reading?

Focus interview questions for students

- 1) How important do you consider learning to read and write to be in Years 7 and 8?
- 2) How much time during the school week do you spend during class time on improving your reading?
- 3) How does the teacher assist you to become better at reading and writing?
- 4) What are some of the things that you enjoy doing during reading in class?
- 5) What are some of the things that you dislike about reading work and why?
- 6) How much do you read in your leisure time?
- 7) Where do you get most of your reading material from?
- 8) How much encouragement do you get from your parents to improve your reading?

Focus interview questions for parents

- 1) How do you encourage your child to read at home?
- 2) Where does your child obtain most of their reading material from?
- 3) How important do you consider instruction in reading skills to be in Years 7 &8?
- 4) How do you know how well your child is doing in reading?
- 5) What concerns you most about your child's reading and what assistance (if any) have you sought?

Appendix C

Observation schedules

TEACHER

T E A C H E R	Questioning	
	Prompting	
	Modeling	
	Telling	
	Explaining	

STUDENTS

S T U D E N T S	Answers open question	
	Answers closed question	
	Asks open question	
	Asks closed question	
	Makes a statement	

Appendix D

Axial coding table

Axial coding - linking and connecting codes/making connections between a category and its sub category

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Literacy Leaders</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>Axial</i>
Effective practices	An expectation that all learners will achieve	Effective practices		Effective practices	Teacher led strategies Student led strategies Student responses Authoritative roles Reading aloud to students and questioning Using library and picture books	Effective practices	Classroom management Independent reading activities	Effective practices	
Assessment tools	School-wide use of standardised assessment to monitor achievement and identify specific needs	Assessment tools	School-wide assessment of reading	Assessment tools		Assessment tools	Reading level Assessment tools	Assessment information	

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Literacy Leaders</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>Axial</i>
Transitions from primary to secondary school		Transitions from primary to secondary school		Transitions from primary to secondary school				Transitions from primary to secondary school	
Home school partnerships		Home school partnerships		Home school partnerships				Home school partnerships	Seeking external assessment of reading achievement Home-school relationships
Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers		Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers		Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers				Plateaus and dips in reading and low progress readers	Trying to get extra help for the underachiever
Reading skills: decoding, comprehension and vocabulary		Reading skills: decoding, comprehension and vocabulary	Comprehension Intense work around vocabulary	Reading skills: decoding, comprehension and vocabulary	Decoding, Comprehension Vocabulary				
Motivation and engagement		Motivation and engagement		Motivation and engagement	Motivating reading, especially among boys Promoting books Providing rewards Making reading “safe” and fun	Motivation and encouragement	Motivation and Encouragement		

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Literacy Leaders</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>Axial</i>
Instructional reading strategies		Instructional reading strategies		Instructional reading strategies	Strategies the teachers implemented questioning, modelling, feedback, Scaffolding, telling explaining	Instructional reading strategies	Guided reading group instruction		
Whole school environment and professional development	Sustained professional development in literacy	Whole school environment and professional development	Literacy leadership Professional development in reading	Whole school environment and professional development					
Multi-literacies		Multi-literacies				Multi- literacies			
Literacy pedagogy		Literacy pedagogy	Strong knowledge of literacy pedagogy	Literacy pedagogy					
Challenges and barriers		Challenges and barriers							
Ethnicity		Ethnicity							
Helping teachers to improve their practice	A collaborative environment with whole-school commitment	Helping teachers to improve their practice							

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Literacy Leaders</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Axial</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>Axial</i>
						Student attitudes to importance of reading	Students' attitudes to reading		
						How teachers assist students in reading			
						Student preferences in reading time	Children's preferences during reading instruction		
						Student dislikes during reading instruction	Dislikes during reading instruction		
			Libraries and literature			Library use	Library use	Library use	Library use
						Parental reading habits	Parental reading habits	Parental reading habits	Parents' attitudes and abilities in personal reading
						Home and outside reading habits	Influence of parents and other family members		Providing a supportive home environment for reading

References

- Aaron, P., Joshi, M., & Quatroche, D. (2008). *Becoming a professional reading teacher*. Baltimore MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Absolum, M. (2006). *Clarity in the classroom*. Auckland Hodder Education.
- Afflerbach, P. (2005). National Reading Conference Policy Brief: High stakes testing and reading assessment. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 37(2), 151-162.
- Ahrens, B. C. (2005). Finding a new way: reinventing a sixth-grade reading program. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(8), 642-654.
- Alexander, P. A., & Fox, E. (2004). A historical perspective on reading research and practice. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 33-68). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Allington, R. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers.
- Allington, R., & McGill-Franzen, A. (2004). Looking back, looking forward: A conversation about teaching reading in the 21st century. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 5-32). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Alsbaugh, J. W. (1998). Achievement loss associated with the transition to middle school and high school. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92(1), 20.
- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Appleby, Y., & Bathmaker, A. (2006). The new skills agenda: Increased lifelong learning or new sites of inequality? . *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(5), 703–717.
- Askew, S., & Lodge, C. (2000). *Gifts, ping-pong and loops: Linking feedback and learning*. London: Routledge.
- Au, K. (1998). Social constructivism and the school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 30(2), 297–319.
- Au, K. (2002). Multicultural factors and the effect of the instruction of students of diverse backgrounds. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading* (pp. 392–414). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

- Averill, R., Anderson, D., Easton, H., & Hynds, A. (2004). Understanding the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi in mathematics programs. In I. Putt, R. Faragher & M. McLean (Eds.), *Mathematics education for the third millennium : towards 2010* (Vol. 1, pp. 55-62). Sydney: MERGA.
- Baker, L. (2003). The role of parents in motivating struggling readers. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 19, 87–106.
- Baker, L., & Scher, D. (2002). Beginning readers' motivation for reading in relation to parental beliefs and home reading experiences. *Reading Psychology*, 23(4), 239-269.
- Baker, L., Scher, D., & Mackler, K. (1997). Home and family influences on motivations for literacy. *Educational Psychologist*, 32, 69-82.
- Baker, L., Sonnenschein, S., Serpell, R., Scher, D., Fernandez-Fein, S., Munsterman, K., et al. (1998). Early literacy at home: Children's experiences and parents' perspectives. In R. Allington (Ed.), *Teaching struggling readers* (pp. 262–266). Newark, DL: International Reading Association.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Barbour, R. S., & Schostak, J. (2005). Interviewing and focus groups. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 41-48). London: Sage.
- Baumann, J., Kame'enui, E., & Ash, G. (2003). Research on vocabulary instruction: voltaire redux. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J. Squire & J. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (2nd ed., pp. 752-785). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Beveridge, S. (2005). *Children, families and schools: Developing partnerships for inclusive education*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J., & Biddulph, C. (2003). *The complexity of community and family influences on children's achievement in New Zealand: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Biddulph, J. (2004). *Reading together: Workshop leader's handbook*. Hamilton: The Biddulph Group.
- Bishop, R. (2003). Changing Power Relations in Education: Kaupapa Maori messages for 'mainstream' education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 221-238.

- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S., & Richardson, C. (2003). *Te Kōtahitanga: The Experiences of Year 9 and 10 Māori Students in Mainstream Classrooms*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Black, W. R. (2008). The contradiction of high-stakes accountability 'success': a case of focused leadership and performance agency. *The international journal of leadership in education: Theory and practice*, 11(1), 1-22.
- Borman, G., Slavin, R. E., Cheung, A., Chamberlain, A., Madden, N. A., & Chambers, B. (2007). Final reading outcomes of the national randomized field trial of Success for All. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 701-731.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passerson, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Bowen, B. (Dec 98/Jan 99). Four puzzles in adult literacy: Reflections on the national adult literacy survey. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 42(4), 314-325.
- Braggett, E., & Moltzen, R. (2000). Programs and practices for identifying and nurturing giftedness and talent in Australia and New Zealand. In K. Heller, F. Monks, R. Sternberg & R. Subotnik (Eds.), *International handbook of giftedness and talent* (2nd ed., pp. 779- 797). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1996). Developmental ecology through space and time: a future perspective. In P. Moen, G. Elder & K. Luscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1996). Developmental ecology through space and time: a future perspective. In P. Moen, G. Elder & K. Luscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). Interacting systems in human development: Research paradigms : Present and future. In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Making human beings human: biological perspectives on human development* (pp. 67-93). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Mahoney, M. (Eds.). (1975). *Influences on Human Development*. Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press.
- Brown, R., Pressley, M., Van Meter, P., & Schuler, T. (2004). A quasi-experimental validation of transactional strategies: instruction with low-achieving second-grade readers. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 998-1039).
- Brozo, W. (2005). Avoiding the "fourth-grade slump". *Thinking Classroom*, 6(4), 48.
- Brozo, W., & Flynt, E. (2007). Content literacy: Fundamental toolkit elements. *Reading Teacher*, 61(2), 192-194.
- Brozo, W., Shiel, G., & Topping, K. (2007). Engagement in reading: lessons learned from three PISA countries. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(4), 304-312.
- Brozo, W. G., Shiel, G., & Topping, K. (2007). Engagement in reading: lessons learned from three PISA countries. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(4), 304-312.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. L. (2004). *Trust in schools: a core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Byrne, B. (2007). Theories of learning to read. In M. J. Snowling & C. Hulme (Eds.), *The science of reading: a handbook* (pp. 104-119). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Caldwell, B. J. (2006). *Re-imagining educational leadership*. Camberwell: ACER Press.
- Cambourne, B. (2002). Holisitic, integrated approaches to reading and language arts instruction: The constructivist framework of an instructional theory. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading* (pp. 25-47). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Carr, M. (2000). Seeking children's perspectives about their learning. In A. B. Smith, N. J. Taylor & M. M. Gollop (Eds.), *Children's voices: Research, policy and practice* (pp. 37-55). Auckland: Pearson Education New Zealand
- Cazden, C. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Chall, J. S., & Jacobs, V. A. (2003). Poor Children's Fourth-Grade Slump. *American Educator*, 27(1), 14.
- Chamberlain, J., Daniels, C., Madden, N. A., & Slavin, R. E. (2007). A Randomized evaluation of the success for all middle school reading program. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, 2(1), 1-21.
- Chamberlain, M. (2007a). Reading literacy in New Zealand: An overview of New Zealand's results from the Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS)

- 2005/2006. Retrieved 6 January, 2009, from
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2539/pirls_0506/34905/15
- Chamberlain, M. (2007b). Reading literacy in New Zealand: an overview of New Zealand's results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2005/2006. Retrieved 21 September 2009, from
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2539/pirls_0506/16390
- Chamberlain, M. (2008). PIRLS 2005/2006 in New Zealand: an overview of national findings from the second cycle of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Retrieved 6 January, 2009, from
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2539/pirls_0506/34905/34905/7
- Chambers-Cantrell, S., & Hughes, H. (2008). Teacher efficacy and content literacy implementation: An exploration of the effects of extended professional development with coaching. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 40(1), 95-127.
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed., pp. 249-291). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Application for advancing social justice studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 507-536). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Chharbra, V., & McCardle, P. (2004). Contributions to Evidence-Based Research. In V. Chharbra & P. McCardle (Eds.), *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research*. (pp. 3-13). Baltimore: Brookes
- Clark, K. F., & Graves, M. F. (2005). Scaffolding students' comprehension of text. *Reading Teacher*, 58(6), 570-580.
- Clarke, S., Timperley, H., & Hattie, J. (2003). *Unlocking formative assessment: Practical strategies for enhancing students' learning in the primary and intermediate classroom* (New Zealand edition ed.). Wellington: Hodder Moa Beckett.
- Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University.
- Comparative Education Research Unit. (2007). PIRLS 2005/2006 – a summary of findings for New Zealand Retrieved 6 January, 2009, from
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2539/pirls_0506/16400

- Conley, M. W. (2009). Improving adolescent comprehension. In S. E. Israel & G. G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 531-550). New York: Routledge.
- Connell, R. (2009). *Education, research and social justice, Keynote address*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE).
- Conway, G., & Eleven, B. (2010, 3 July). Tolley angers teachers with order to stop politicking. *The Press*, pp. A3-2.
- Coxon, E., Anae, M., Mara, D., Wendt-Samu, T., & Finau, C. (2002). *Literature Review on Pacific Education Issues - Final Report* (No. 8804.00). Auckland: Auckland Uniservices Limited.
- Craig, C. (2010). Coming full circle: from teacher reflection to classroom action and places in-between. *Teachers and teaching*, 16(4), 423-435.
- Cremin, T., Bearne, E., Mottram, M., & Goodwin, P. (2008). Primary teachers as readers. *English in Education*, 42(1), 8-23.
- Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Bearne, E., & Goodwin, P. (2008). Exploring teachers' knowledge of children's literature. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38(4), 449-464.
- Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F., Powell, S., & Safford, K. (2009). Teachers as readers: building communities of readers. *Literacy*, 43(1), 11-19.
- Crooks, T., Smith, J., & Flockton, L. (2009). *National Education Monitoring Project: Reading and Speaking Assessment Results for 2008*. Dunedin: Educational Assessment Research Unit, University of Otago.
- Cullen, J. (2002). The social and cultural contexts of early literacy: Making the links between homes, centres and schools. In P. Adams & H. Ryan (Eds.), *Learning to Read in Aotearoa New Zealand: A collaboration between early childhood educators, families and schools* (pp. 66-81). Palmerston North: Dunmore.
- Cumming-Potvin, W. (2007). Scaffolding, Multiliteracies, and Reading Circles. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(2), 483.
- Daniels, H. (2001). *Literature circles: voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Davis, A. (2007a). Eye on the classroom: Teaching to raise achievement in reading. Unpublished Unpublished paper delivered to a literacy symposium. College of Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, August 2007.
- Davis, A. (2007b). *Teaching reading comprehension*. Wellington: Learning Media.

- Davis, N. E. (2008). How may teacher learning be promoted for educational renewal with IT? . In J. Voogt & G. Gerald Knezek (Eds.), *International handbook of information technology in primary and secondary education* (pp. 507-519): Kluwer Press.
- Day, C. (2005). Principals who sustain success: making a difference in schools in challenging circumstances. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 8(4), 273-290.
- Dennis, D. V., Lefsky, E., & Allington, R. L. (2009). Engaging adolescents in thoughtful literacy practices. In K. D. Wood & W. E. Blanton (Eds.), *Literacy instruction for adolescents: Research-based practice* (pp. 494-509). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2002). *Ground rules for Good Research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill.
- Denscombe, M. (2003). *The Good Research Guide*. Maidenhead: Open University/McGraw-Hill.
- Dockrell, J., Lewis, A., & Lindsay, G. (2000). *Researching children's perspectives: A psychological dimension*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Doyle, B., & Bramwell, W. (2006). Promoting emergent literacy and social-emotional learning through dialogic reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(6), 554-564.
- Drago-Severson, E., & Pinto, K. (2006). School leadership for reducing teacher isolation: Drawing from the well of human resources. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, 9(2), 129-155.
- Duffy, G. G., & Hoffman, J. (2002). Beating the odds in literacy education: Not the "betting on" but the "bettering of" schools and teachers. In B. M. Taylor & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Teaching reading: Effective schools, accomplished teachers* (pp. 375-388). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Durkin, D. (1978-79). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16(4), 515-544.
- Dymock, S. (2010). The CORE model: A framework for teaching research-based comprehension strategies, *23rd IRA World Congress in Reading: Leading and Learning in Literacy*. Auckland, New Zealand.
- Elley, W. B. (1992). *How in the world do students read?* New York: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

- Elley, W. B. (2001). *STAR Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading Years 4–9*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Everatt, J. (2009). Dyslexia in children and adults: How research might inform practice, *Prestige lecture series*. University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Everatt, J. (2009). Meeting with the New Zealand Ministry of Education (pp. Recognition of Dyslexia in New Zealand). Christchurch.
- Everatt, J., Smythe, I., Ocampo, D., & Gyarmathy, E. (2004). Issues in the assessment of literacy related difficulties across language backgrounds: A cross-linguistic comparison. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 27(2), 141 -151.
- Farstrup, A. (2002). There is more to effective reading instruction than research. In A. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading* (pp. 1–7). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Farstrup, A. (2005). Qualified reading specialists: More important than ever. *Reading Today*, 23(3), 18.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2007). Implementing a schoolwide literacy framework: Improving achievement in an urban elementary school. *Reading Teacher*, 61(1), 32-43.
- Fletcher, J., & Parkhill, F. (2007). What supports reading achievement? What doesn't? The views of Asian students. *The Journal of Reading and Writing and Literacy*, 2(3), 105- 138.
- Fletcher, J., & Parkhill, F. (2008). Asian students in New Zealand classrooms: Their perceptions of supports and barriers to reading achievement. *Set, Research Information for Teachers.*, 2, 39-42.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & Taleni, T. (2006). Pasifika students' perceptions of barriers and support to reading and writing achievement in New Zealand schools. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 41(2), 163 -182.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., & Fa'afoi, A. (2005). What factors promote and support Pasifika students in reading and writing? *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, 2, 2–8.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & Morton, M. (2006). Poto he Anga: Collaboration and consultation in Pasifika research. *Association of Qualitative Research Journal*, 6(1), 36-50.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & Taleni, T. (2010). Motivating Pasifika students in literacy learning. In J. Fletcher, F. Parkhill & G. Gillon (Eds.), *Motivating literacy learners in today's world* (pp. 99-110). Wellington: NZCER.

- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Taleni, T., Fa'afoi, A., & O'Regan, B. (2009). Pasifika students: Teachers and Parents Voice Their Perceptions of What Impacts on Pasifika Students' Achievement in Literacy, Language and Learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 25, 24-33.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Taleni, T., Fa'afoi, A., & O'Regan, B. (2009). Pasifika students: Teachers and Parents Voice Their Perceptions of What Impacts on Pasifika Students' Achievement in Literacy, Language and Learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 25, 24-33.
- Flockton, L., & Crooks, T. (2001). *Reading and speaking: National Education Monitoring Project: 2000 assessment results*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Flockton, L., & Crooks, T. (2003). *Writing: National Education Monitoring Project: 2002 assessment results*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Flockton, L., & Crooks, T. (2005). *Reading and speaking: Assessment results 2004*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2007). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 390-404). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing the Art of Science. In N. K. Denzin & L. Y.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 361-376). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 695-728). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Foster, R. (2004). Leadership and secondary school improvement: case studies of tensions and possibilities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 8(1), 35-52.
- Foster, R. (2005). Leadership and secondary school improvement: case studies of tensions and possibilities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 8(1), 35-52.
- Freebody, P. (2009). Reading as part of knowledge building: Teaching reading in the senior secondary school. Moving from the old to the new: Research on teaching reading in and for the 21st century symposium, first plenary session: University of Sydney.
- Freebody, P., Martin, J. R., & Maton, K. (2008). Talk, text and knowledge in culmative, integrated learning: A response to 'intellectual challenge'. *Australian journal of language and literacy*, 31(2), 188-201.

- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.
- Frost, D. (2007). Practitioner research and leadership: The key to school improvement. In A. Briggs & M. Coleman (Eds.), *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: system thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gaine, G., & George, R. (1999). *Gender, "race" and class in schooling: A new introduction*. London: Falmer Press.
- Galda, L., & Beach, R. (2004). Response of literature as a cultural activity. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 852-869). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Gavelek, J., & Bresnahan, P. (2009). Ways of meaning making: sociocultural perspectives on reading comprehension. In S. E. Israel & G. G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 140-176). New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacy: Ideology in discourses*. London: Falmer Press.
- Gee, J. P. (2004). Reading as situated language: A sociocognitive perspective. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 116-132). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. London: Fontana.
- Gerritsen, J. (2008). Skills worth billions for NZ economy, experts say. *New Zealand Education Review*, 13(28), 3.
- Gillon, G. (2007). *Phonological Awareness: From Research to Practice. Challenges in Language and Literacy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Gillon, G., & McNeill, B. (2010). Phonological awareness: Motivating early literacy success. In J. Fletcher, F. Parkhill & G. Gillon (Eds.), *Motivating literacy learners in today's world* (pp. 53-66). Wellington: NZCER.
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, A. W. (2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its meaning, measure and impact on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37, 479-507.
- Goldenberg, C. (2004). Literacy for all children in the increasingly diverse schools of the United States. In R. B. Ruddell & N. J. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and*

- processes of reading (5th ed.)* (5th ed., pp. 1636-1666). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Gollop, M. M. (2000). Interviewing students: A research perspective. In A. B. Smith, N. J. Taylor & M. M. Gollop (Eds.), *Students' voices: Research, policy and practice*. Auckland: Pearson Education
- Gorard, S. (2010). Serious doubts about school effectiveness. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(5), 745-766.
- Graves, M. F., & Graves, B. B. (2003). *Scaffolding reading experiences: Designs for student success*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Greene, J. C., Kreider, H., & Mayer, E. (2005). Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in social inquiry. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 274-282). London: Sage.
- Grenfell, M. (2009). Bourdieu, language, and literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(4), 438-448.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-216). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Humenick, N. M. (2004). Motivating students to read: Evidence for classroom practices that increase reading motivation and achievement. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research* (pp. 329-354). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Haas, E., & Poynor, L. (2005). Issues of teaching and learning. In F. English (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Educational Leadership: Advances in Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp. 483- 505). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hall, K., & Harding, A. (2003). A systematic review of effective literacy teaching in the 4 to 14 age range of mainstream schooling. *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.
- Hammersley, M. (1992). Deconstructing the qualitative-quantitative divide. In J. Brannen (Ed.), *Mixing methods: qualitative and quantitative research* (pp. 39-55). Aldershot: Avebury.
- Harris, J. (2008). A generation of underachievers. *New Zealand Education Review*, 13(28), 1-2.
- Harrison, C. (2004). *Understanding reading development*. London: Sage.

- Harry, B., Klinger, J., & Sturges, K. (2005). Qualitative data analysis: Mapping the process. *Educational Researcher*, 34, 3-13.
- Hattie, J. (2003). *New Zealand Education Snapshot*. Paper presented at the Knowledge Wave Conference: The Leadership Forum.
- Hattie, J. (2007). The status of reading in New Zealand schools: *The upper primary plateau problem* (UP). *Reading Forum N.Z.*, 22(3), 25-39.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Heck, R., & Hallinger, P. (1999). Next generation methods for the study of leadership and school improvement. In J. Murphy & K. Seashore-Lewis (Eds.), *The handbook on research on educational administration* (pp. 141-162). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Henderson, R. (2008a). A boy behaving badly: Investigating teachers' assumptions about gender, behaviour, mobility and literacy learning *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 13(1), 74-87.
- Henderson, R. (2008b). Mobilising multiliteracies: Pedagogy for mobile students. In A. Healey (Ed.), *Multiliteracies and diversity in education* (pp. 168-200). South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Henze, R., & Arriaza, G. (2006). Language and reforming schools: A case for a critical approach in educational leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(2), 157-177.
- Hill, M. (2005). Ethical considerations in researching children's experiences. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods* (pp. 22-41). London: Sage.
- Hirsch, E. D. J. R. (2003). Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge -- of Words and the World. *American Educator*, 27(1), 10-13, 16-22, 28-29.
- Hoffman, J. (1991). Teacher and school effects in learning to read. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal & P. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 2, pp. 911-950). New York: Longman.
- Hoffman, J. (2009). In search of the "Simple View" of reading comprehension. In S. E. Israel & G. G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 54-66). New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Hoover, W., & Gough, P. (1990). The simple view of reading. *Reading and writing: An interdisciplinary journal*(2), 127-160.

- Hughes-Hassell, S., & Rodge, P. (2007). The leisure reading habits of urban adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(1), 22-33.
- Ivey, G., & Broaddus, K. (2001). 'Just plain reading': A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4), 350.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). 'Mixed methods research: A reserach paradigm whose time has come'. *Educational Research*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Jones, L., & Somekh, B. (2005). Observation. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 138-145). London: Sage.
- Kemmis, S., & Grootenboer, P. (2008). Situating praxis in practice: Practice architectures and the cultural, social and material conditions for practice. In S. Kemmis & T. J. Smith (Eds.), *Enabling praxis: Challenges for education* (pp. 37-64). Rotterdam: sense.
- Klenowski, V. (2009). Raising the stakes: the challenges for teacher assessment, key note address, *Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)*. Canberra.
- Lai, M. K., McNaughton, S., Amituanai-Toloa, M., Turner, R., & Hsiao, S. (2009). Sustained acceleration of achievement in reading comprehension: The New Zealand experience. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(1), 30-56.
- Lambert, L., Walker, D., Zimmerman, D., Cooper, J., Lambert, M., Gardner, M., et al. (1995). *The constructivist leader*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Langer, J. (2004). Beating the odds: teaching middle and high school students to read and write well. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 1040-1082).
- Le Compte, M., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Leseman, P. M., & de Jong, P. F. (1998). Home Literacy: Opportunity, Instruction, Cooperation and Social-Emotional Quality Predicting Early Reading Achievement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(3), 294.
- Liang, L. A., & Dole, J. A. (2006). Help with teaching reading comprehension: Comprehension instructional frameworks. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(8), 742-753.
- Limbrick, L., & Aikman, M. (2005). New times: the place of literacies and English in the curriculum. *Curriculum Matters*, 1, 29-48.
- Limbrick, L., & Knight, N. (2005). Close reading of students' writing: what teachers learn about writing. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 4(2), 5-22.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage.

- Lloyd-Smith, M., & Tarr, J. (2000). *Researching children's perspectives: A sociological dimension*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Lockwood, M. (2008). *Promoting reading for pleasure in the primary school*. London: Sage.
- Ma, W. (2008). Participatory dialogue and participatory learning in a discussion-based graduate seminar. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 40, 220-249.
- Macfarlane, A. (2010). Motivating Maori students in literacy learning: Listening to culture. In J. Fletcher, F. Parkhill & G. Gillon (Eds.), *Motivating literacy learners in today's world* (Vol. 89-98). Wellington: NZCER.
- MacGibbon, L., Gilmore, F., Gilmore, A., Parkhill, F., Fletcher, J., & Johnson, J. (2009). An Evaluation of the Use of School Journal and Ready to Read Series to Support Effective Literacy Practice: Report to the New Zealand Ministry of Education. Wellington.
- Madden, N. A., & Slavin, R. E. (2010). *A success for all: A summary of evaluations*. Paper presented at the Third Educational Psychology Forum.
- Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and awareness*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R., M. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer Press.
- McKeown, M., Beck, I., & Blake, R. (2009). Rethinking reading comprehension instruction: A comparison of instruction of instruction strategies and content approaches. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(3), 218-253.
- McNaughton, S. (2002). *Meeting of minds*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- McNaughton, S., Amituanai-Tolosa, M., & Lai, M. K. (2007). *Drawing implications for the literacy strategy from two schooling improvement projects*. Auckland: Auckland Uniservices Limited, University of Auckland.
- McNaughton, S., Lai, M. K., Amituanai-Tolosa, M., & Ferry, S. (2008). Enhanced teaching and learning of comprehension in Years 5-8: Otara Schools. Teaching and Learning Initiative. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- McNaughton, S., Lai, M. K., MacDonald, S., & Farry, S. (2004). Designing more effective teaching of comprehension in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms in New Zealand. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 27(3), 184-197.

- McNaughton, S., Phillips, G., & MacDonald, S. (2003). Profiling Teaching and Learning Needs in Beginning Literacy Instruction: The Case of Children in "Low Decile" Schools in New Zealand. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 35(2), 703 - 730.
- Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education*. California: Jossey-Bass.
- Ministry of Education. (2002). PISA 2000: Overview of selected New Zealand findings. Retrieved August 7, 2007, from <http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/downloads/pisa.overview.2000.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2003a). *AsTTle: Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning, Version 3*. Auckland: University of Auckland.
- Ministry of Education. (2003b). *Raising the achievement of Pasifika students: Literacy leadership*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2004a). Focus on Pasifika achievement in reading literacy. Retrieved from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz>
- Ministry of Education. (2004b). Pasifika education overview. Retrieved from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz>
- Ministry of Education. (2005). *Lighting the way: a summary of the best available evidence about effective literacy, numeracy and language teaching*. Wellington: Tertiary Education Literacy Outcomes Policy, Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2006). Reading Literacy in New Zealand: PIRLS 2005/2006 – A summary of the findings. Retrieved 12 March 2009, from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2539/pirls_0506/16400
- Ministry of Education. (2007). Pasifika Education Plan. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2009a). The National Administration Guidelines (NAGS) Retrieved 12 October, 2009, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/educationSectors/Schools/PolicyAndStrategy/PlanningReportingRelevantLegislationNEGSAndNAGS/TheNationalAdministrationGuidelinesNAGs.aspx>
- Ministry of Education. (2009b). The National Administration Guidelines (NAGS). Retrieved 8 March, 2009, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/educationSectors/Schools/PolicyAndStrategy/PlanningReportingRelevantLegislationNEGSAndNAGS/TheNationalAdministrationGuidelinesNAGs.aspx>
- Ministry of Social Development. (2004). Opportunity for all New Zealanders. Retrieved 5 January, 2009, from <http://www.msd.govt.nz/opportunity-for-all>

- Moats, L. (2004a). Efficacy of a structured, systematic language curriculum for adolescent poor readers. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 20(2), 145-159.
- Moats, L. (2004b). Science, language, and imagination in the professional development of reading teachers. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research* (pp. 269-287). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes
- Moos, L., Krejsler, J., & Kofod, K. (2008). Successful principals: telling or selling? On the importance of context for school leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 2(4), 331 - 340.
- Morgan, A., Nutbrown, C., & Hannon, P. (2009). Fathers' involvement in young children's literacy development: implications for family literacy programmes. *British Educational Research Journal*, 35(2), 167 - 185.
- Mosenthal, J. H., & Mekkelsen, J. E. (2008). School improvement over time. In Y. Kim & V. Kiosko (Eds.), *57th yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 283-297). Oak Creek, Wisconsin: National Reading Conference, Inc.
- Moss, B. (2005). Making a case and a place for effective content area literacy instruction in the elementary grades. *Reading Teacher*, 59(1), 46-55.
- Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Kennedy, A. M., & Foy, P. (2007). *PIRLS 2006 International Report*. Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College.
- National Party Policy. (2008). Education Policy: Crusade for Literacy and Numeracy. Retrieved 8 March, 2009, from http://national.org.nz/files/2008/Education_Policy_Crusade_for_Literacy.pdf.
- Neuman, L. W. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Neuman, L. W. (2003). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- New Zealand Literacy Taskforce. (1999). *Report of the Literacy Taskforce : advice to the Government on achieving its goal that: "By 2005, every child turning nine will be able to read, write, and do maths for success" : a report / prepared for the Minister of Education*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2003a). *AsTTle: Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning, Version 3*. Auckland: University of Auckland.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2003b). *Effective literacy practice in Years 1-4*. Wellington: Learning Media.

- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2003c). *The home-school partnership programme: Literacy focus*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2003d). *Statement of intent. 2003-2008*. Wellington: Author.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2005). *Guided reading: Years 5 to 8*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2006). *Effective literacy practice in Years 5–8*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2007). Reading Literacy in New Zealand: PIRLS 2005/2006 – A summary of findings for New Zealand. Retrieved 12 March 2009, from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/16571/PIRLS-05_summary.pdf
- New Zealand Parliament. (2008). Education (National Standards) Amendment bill - first Reading, Second Reading, In Committee. Retrieved 5 January, 2009, from http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/e/4/a/49HansD_20081212_00001572-Education-National-Standards-Amendment-bill.htm
- Ng, L. (2007). *Annual Monitoring of Reading Recovery*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Education.
- Nichols, S. (2000). Unsettling the bedtime story: parents' reports on home literacy practices. *Contemporary issues in Early childhood Education*, 1(3), 315 - 328.
- Nutbrown, C., & Hannon, P. (2003). Children's perspectives on family literacy: methodological issues, findings and implications for practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 3(2), 115 - 145.
- Nuthall, G. (2007). *The hidden lives of learners*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Nystrand, M. (2006). Research on the role of classroom discourse as it affects reading comprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 40(4), 392-412.
- Ogawa, R. (1995). Images of schools: Structures and roles in educational behavior. In S. B. Bacharach & B. Mundell (Eds.), *Administrator succession in school organizations* (pp. 359-389). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Olsen, J. A., & Barber, B. K. (2004). Assessing the transitions to middle and high school. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 19(1), 3-30.

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2007). PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World (Vol. 1, Available from www.pisa.oecd.org)
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (1997). *Literacy skills for the knowledge society: Further results from the International Adult Literacy Survey*. Paris: OECD and Human Resources Development Canada.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2001). *Knowledge and skills for life: first results from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*. Paris: Author.
- Ortiz, R. W., & Ordonez-Jasis, R. (2005). Leyendo Juntos (Reading Together): New directions for Latino parent's early literacy involvement. *Reading Teacher*, 59(2), 110-121.
- Overton, L., Hills, H., & Dixon, G. (2007). Towards maturity: Looking at the impact of e-learning in the workplace. Retrieved 9 September 2009, from www.e-skills.com/Work-based-e-learning/1411
- Padak, N., & Rasinski, T. (2006). Home-School Partnerships in Literacy Education: From Rhetoric to Reality. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(3), 292-296.
- Paris, S. (2005). Reinterpreting the development of reading skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 40(2), 184-202.
- Paris, S. (2009). Reading development in the early years: Instructional, assessment, and educational policies, *Moving from the old to the new: Research on teaching reading in and for the 21st century symposium, first plenary session*. The University of Sydney.
- Paris, S., & Hamilton, E. (2009). The development of children's reading comprehension. In S. E. Israel & G. G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 32-53). New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Parkhill, F., & Fletcher, J. (2010). Asian student voices: Approaches in reading that motivate or provoke dissonance in their journey towards successful readers of English. In J. Fletcher, F. Parkhill & G. Gillon (Eds.), *Motivating literacy learners in today's world* (pp. 111-120). Wellington: NZCER.
- Parkhill, F., Fletcher, J., & Fa'afai, A. (2005). What makes for success? Current literacy practices and the impact of family and community on Pasifika students' literacy learning. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 40(1&2), 61-84.

- Pearson, P. D. (2009a). Reading, writing, and language: tools for learning, enjoyment, and insight in middle years, *Moving from the old to the new: Research on teaching reading in and for the 21st century symposium, first plenary session* The University of Sydney.
- Pearson, P. D. (2009b). The roots of reading comprehension instruction. In S. E. Israel & G. G. Duffy (Eds.), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 3-31). New York: Routledge.
- Phillips, J. (2008). The impact of Reading Recovery on children and their families. Unpublished Research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership. University of Canterbury.
- Plaut, D. C. (2007). Connectionist approaches to reading. In M. J. Snowling & C. Hulme (Eds.), *The science of reading: A handbook* (pp. 24-38). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Poole, D. (2008). Interactional differentiation in the mixed-ability group: a situated view of two struggling readers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(3), 228-251.
- Poulson, L., Avramidis, E., Fox, R., Medwell, J., & Wray, D. (2001). The theoretical beliefs of effective teachers of literacy in primary schools: an exploratory study of orientations to reading and writing. *Research papers in education* 16(3), 271-292.
- Powney, J., & Watts, M. (1987). *Interviewing in educational research*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pressley, M. (2000). What should comprehension instruction be the instruction of? In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. Pearson & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 545-562). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pressley, M. (2002a). Metacognition and Self-Regulated Comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & J. S. Samuels (Eds.), *What Research Has To Say about Reading Instruction. Third Edition*. (pp. 291-309). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Pressley, M. (2002b). *Reading instruction that works: The case of balanced teaching*. (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford.
- Pressley, M. (2006). Children who experience problems in learning to read. In M. Pressley (Ed.), *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 66-95). New York: Guilford Press.
- Pressley, M., Disney, L., & Anderson, K. (2006). Vocabulary. In M. Pressley (Ed.), *Reading Instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Guilford.

- Pressley, M., Roehrig, A., Bogner, K., Raphael, L., & Dolesal, S. (2002). Balanced literacy instruction. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 34(5), 1–14.
- Pressley, M., & Wharton-McDonald, R. (2006). The need for increased comprehension instruction. In M. Pressley (Ed.), *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 293- 346). New York: Guilford Press.
- Purcell-Gates, V. (2000). Family literacy. In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. Pearson & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research (Vol. 3)*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- RAND Reading Study Group. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward a research and development program in reading comprehension*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Education.
- RAND Reading Study Group. (2004). A research agenda for improving reading comprehension. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 720-754). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Raphael, T. E., Highfield, K., & Au, K. (2006). *QAR now: A powerful and practical framework that develops comprehension and higher-level thinking in all students*. New York: Scholastic.
- Rapley, T. (2007). Interviews. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 15-33). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Rashid, F. L., Morris, R. D., & Sevcik, R. A. (2005). Relationship between Home Literacy Environment and Reading Achievement in Children with Reading Disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38(1), 2.
- Reid, N. A., & Elley, W. B. (1991). *Progressive Achievement Tests: Reading comprehension (Rev. ed.)*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (2004). The transactional theory of reading and writing. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 1363-1398). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Rowan, B., & Correnti, R. (2009). Studying reading instruction with teacher logs: Lessons from the study of instructional improvement. *Educational Researcher*, 38(2), 120-131.

- Ruddell, R. (2004). Researching the influential literacy teacher: characteristics, beliefs, strategies, and new research directions. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 979-997). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Ruddell, R., & Unrau, N. (2004a). Reading as a meaning-construction process: the reader, the text, and the teacher. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 1462-1521). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Ruddell, R., & Unrau, N. (2004b). The role of responsive teaching. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 954-978). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Ruddell, R., & Unrau, N. (2004c). *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed.). Newark: International Reading Association.
- Sainsbury, M., & Clarkson, R. (2008). *Attitudes to Reading at Ages Nine and Eleven: Full Report*. Slough: NFER.
- Sainsbury, M., & Schagen, I. (2004). Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 27(4), 373-386.
- San Antonio, D. (2008). Creating better schools through democratic school leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, 11(1), 43-62.
- Satherley, P., Lawes, E., & Sok, S. (2008). *The Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) Survey: Overview and International Comparisons*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 189-214). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Seltzer, M., & Rose, M. (2006). Constructing analyses: The development of thoughtfulness in working with quantitative methods. In C. F. Conrad & R. C. Serlin (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook for research in education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry* (pp. 477-492). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat: Leading and learning together*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Shields, C., & Sayan, A. (2005). Leading in the midst of diversity: The challenge of our times. In F. English (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of Educational leadership: Advances in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 380 - 402). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Shulman, L. S. (1988). Disciplines of inquiry in education:. In R. M. Jaegar (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 3-17). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Skelton, C., Carrington, B., Francis, B., Hutchings, M., Read, B., & Hall, I. (2009). Gender 'matters' in the primary classroom: pupils' and teachers' perspectives. *British Educational Research Journal*, 35(2), 187 - 204.
- Slavin, R. (2010). *Evidence-based reform in education: Lessons from the Best-evidence Encyclopaedia*. Paper presented at the Third Educational Psychology Forum.
- Slavin, R., Cheung, A., Groff, C., & Lake, C. (2008). Effective reading programs for middle and high schools: A best-evidence synthesis *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(3), 290-322.
- Smith, A. B., Taylor, N. J., & Gollop, M. M. (2000). *Children's voices*. Auckland: Pearson Education New Zealand Limited.
- Smith, H., & Higgins, S. (2006). Opening classroom interaction: The importance of feedback. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 36(4), 485-502.
- Smith, J. K., & Deemer, D. K. (2000). The problem of criteria in the age of relativism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 877-896). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Snow, C. E. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward a research and development program in reading comprehension*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Soter, A. O., Wilkinson, I. A., Murphy, P. K., Rudge, L., Reninger, K., & Edwards, M. (2008). What the discourse tells us: Talk and indicators of high-level comprehension. *International journal of educational research*, 47, 372-391.
- Stahl, S. (2002). Foreword. In B. M. Taylor & P. Pearson (Eds.), *Teaching reading: Effective schools, accomplished teachers* (pp. vii-x). Mahwah, NJ.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Stanovich, K. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research quarterly*, 21, 360-407.

- Stanovich, K. (2004). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 454-516). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Statistics Canada. (2003). *About the survey*. . Canada: Statistics Canada.
- Stewart, D., & Prebble, T. (1993). *The reflective principal: School development within a learning community*. Palmerston North: ERDC Press.
- Sticht, T. (2001). Reforming adult literacy education: Transforming local programs into national systems in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States Retrieved from <http://www.nald.ca/FULLTEXT/sticht/reformin/cover.htm>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990a). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990b). *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strike, K. (1999). Can schools be communities? The tensions between shared values and inclusion. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 46-70.
- Strommen, L., & Mates, B. (2004). Learning to Love Reading: Interviews With Older Children and Teens. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(3), 188-200.
- Taleni, L. T., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & Fletcher, J. (2007). Pasifika students: What supports them to become effective readers? *Pacific-Asian Education -The Journal of the Pacific Circle Consortium for Education* 19(2), 57-71.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Taylor, B. M., Pearson, D. P., Peterson, D. S., & Rodriguez, M. C. (2005). The CIERA school change framework: An evidence-based approach to professional development and school reading improvement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 40(1), 40-69.
- Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (2000). Effective schools and accomplished teachers: Lessons about primary-grade reading instruction in low-income schools. *The elementary school journal*, 101(2), 121-165.
- Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Peterson, D. S., & Rodriguez, M. C. (2003). Reading growth in high-poverty classrooms: The influence of teacher practices that encourage cognitive engagement in literacy learning. *Elementary School Journal*(104), 3-28.

- Taylor, B. M., Peterson, D. S., Pearson, P. D., & Rodriguez, M. C. (2002). Looking inside classrooms: reflecting on the “how” as well as the “what” in effective reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(3), 270-279.
- The National Commission for the Protection Of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research. Retrieved 23 September, 2011, from <http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html>
- Timperley, H. (2003). School improvement and teachers' expectations of student achievement. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 38(1), 73-88.
- Timperley, H., & Parr, J. (2007). Closing the achievement gap through evidence-based inquiry at multiple levels of the education system. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 19(1), 90-115.
- Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher professional learning and development*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Townsend, T. (2007). School effectiveness and improvement in the twenty-first century: Reframing for the future. In T. Townsend (Ed.), *International Handbook of School Effectiveness and Improvement* (pp. 933-962). London: Springer.
- Tracey, D. H., & Morrow, L. M. (2006). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Treffinger, D., Nassab, C., & Selby, E. (2009). Programming for talent development: expanding horizons for gifted education. In T. Balchin, B. Hymer & D. Matthews (Eds.), *The Routledge International Companion to gifted education* (pp. 210 - 217). London: Routledge.
- Twist, L., Gnaldi, M., Schagen, I., & Morrison, J. (2004). Good readers but at a cost? Attitudes to reading in England. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 27(4), 387-400.
- Twist, L., Schagen, I., & Hodgson, C. (2007). Readers and Reading: the National Report for England 2006 (PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) Retrieved 22 September, 2009, from <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pirls-2006.cfm>
- UNESCO Education. (2003). United Literacy Decade 2003–2012. Retrieved February 16 2007, from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27158&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC

- Valencia, S. W., & Wixson, K. K. (2004). Literacy policy and policy research that make a difference. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 69-93). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Van Keer, H. (2004). Fostering reading comprehension in fifth grade by explicit instruction in reading strategies and peer tutoring. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74, 37-70.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Singagub, J. M. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wade, B., & Moore, M. (1996). Home activities: The advent of literacy. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 4(2), 63-76.
- Waldegrave, C. (1999). Focus groups: Participation in poverty research. In C. Davidson & M. Tolich (Eds.), *Social science research education in New Zealand* (pp. 231-242). Auckland: Pearson Education New Zealand Limited.
- Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1994). What influences learning? A content analysis of review literature. *Journal of Educational Research*, 84, 39-43.
- Weigel, D. J., Martin, S. S., & Bennett, K. K. (2005). Ecological influences of the home and the child-care center on preschool children's literacy development. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 40(2), 204-233.
- Westerveld, M. F., & Gillon, G. (2008). Oral narrative intervention for children with mixed reading disability. *Child language teaching and therapy*, 24(1), 31-54.
- Whitby, K., Lord, P., O'Donnell, S., & Grayson, H. (2006). Dips in performance and motivation: a purely English perception? *National Foundation for Educational Research, INCA International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive* Retrieved 9 August, 2011, from http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Final_Dip_Report.pdf
- Whittaker, M. (2001, December 10). Have the gremlins got basic skills to teach adults? *Times Educational Supplement*, p. 31.
- Wieviorka, M. (1992). Case studies: histoires or sociology? In C. Ragin & H. Becker (Eds.), *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry* (pp. 159-172). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Wilkinson, I. (2010). What's new about research on learning and teaching to comprehend? The fourth wave, *23rd IRA World Congress on Reading: Leading and Learning in Literacy*. Auckland, New Zealand.
- Williams, T., & Baumann, J. (2008). Contemporary research on effective elementary literacy teachers. In Y. Kim & V. Kisko (Eds.), *57th yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 357-372). Oak Creek, Wisconsin: National Reading Conference, Inc.
- Wilson, J. L., & Laman, T. T. (2007). "That Was Basically Me": Critical Literacy, Text, and Talk. *Voices From the Middle*, 15(2), 40.
- Wood, C. (2002). Parent--child pre-school activities can affect the development of literacy skills. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 25(3), 241-258.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17, 89-100.
- Wray, D., Medwell, J., Fox, R., & Poulson, L. (1999). Teaching reading: lessons from the experts. *Reading*, 17-22.
- Wray, D., Medwell, J., Fox, R., & Poulson, L. (2000). The teaching practices of effective teachers of literacy. *Educational Review*, 52(1), 75-84.
- Wray, D., Medwell, J., Poulson, L., & Fox, R. (2002). *Teaching literacy effectively in the primary school*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Wright Springate, K., & Stegelin, D. A. (1999). *Building school and community partnerships through parent involvement*. New Jersey: Merrill.
- Wylie, C. (2004). Competent children at 12 years. Retrieved from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid>
- Wylie, C. (2005). *Competent children at 12*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Wylie, C., & Hodgen, E. (2007). *Competent learners @ 16: Competency levels and development over time*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Wyse, D., & Goswami, U. (2008). Synthetic phonics and the teaching of reading. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(6), 691-710.
- Yang-Hansen, K., Rosén, M., & Gustafsson, J. E. (2007). Effects of socio-economic status on reading achievement at collective and individual levels in Sweden in 1991 and 2001. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from <http://www.iea.nl/irc2004-pirls.html>
- Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.